Cops kill 6 suspected car thieves near checkpoint

Story in Metro, PAGE A20

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Cops still clueless on priest's killing

ON TUESDAY morning, it was a broadcaster. In the evening of the same day, it was a priest.

The Central Police District Office yesterday reported that a Roman Catholic priest was found stabbed to death in his home in Quezon City late Tuesday evening.

CPD investigators said Fr. Albert Tanghal, 50, a parish priest in Ermita, Manila,

COPS/ A8

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Shell, Caltex raise cooking gas price** NEWS/A5
- **Senators revive Jose Pidal probe** NEWS/A3
- **Peso continues recovery** BUSINESS/B1

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Thursday, December 4, 2003 ★★ 56 pages / 6 sections / vol. 18 / no. 359 P15

website: www.inq7.net

GMA asks energy board to reconsider power rate hike

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine O. Avendaño

FACED with a growing perception that the rate increase granted to Manila Electric Co. was part of a political deal, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday asked the Energy Regulatory Commission to "reconsider" its order allowing the country's biggest power distributor to raise starting next month its rate by 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour.

The ERC is headed by her appointee and former press undersecretary, Manuel Sanchez.

Ms Macapagal bristled at allegations that the power rate increase was a concession to the Lopezes, owners of Meralco and ABS-CBN, to allow their popular talent, Sen. Noli de Castro, to be her running mate in the May presidential election.

"We have never mixed these sensitive rate determination processes with politics and we are asking the ERC to deal with the public in complete transparency in explaining to the last detail how it came about with its decision, so that this will not be used by any quarters to whip up unreasonable indignation or spread rumors of political deals," she said in a statement.

Administration officials Heherson Alvarez, spokesperson of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, and Michael Defensor, the President's political spokesperson, acknowledge that De Castro was being wooed by the administration because of his high ratings in surveys.

Alvarez said the President's advisers should "take into account" the perception and rethink the plan to recruit De Castro as her running mate.

Ms Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye denounced those trying to link the

GMA/ A18

FPJ, Noli neck and neck

SWS latest poll shows Roco 3rd, GMA 4th

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

ACTION star Fernando Poe Jr. made a "phenomenal" leap from fourth place in the Social Weather Stations' survey in September to first place in the latest SWS survey in November.

Poe tied with previous topnotcher Sen. Noli de Castro in the nationwide survey conducted on Nov. 8-24, when the actor had yet to announce his candidacy. The survey, commissioned by the consulting firm Polistrat International, limited the field to just five.

At a press briefing, SWS president Mahar Mangahas said Poe and De Castro were statistically tied at first place because the survey had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

In the vice presidential race, De Castro retained the lead, but second-placer Sen. Loren Legarda narrowed the gap.

Of the 1,200 respondents, 25 percent said they would vote for Poe if the presidential election were held last month. Twenty-four percent said they would vote for De Castro, who has not declared that he is running for president.

Former Sen. Raul Roco and President Macapagal-Arroyo were tied at third. Roco garnered 18 percent and Ms Macapagal, 17 percent.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson landed last with 10 percent. Six percent of the respondents were undecided.

In another survey conducted last month by Pulse Asia, Roco emerged ahead in either a three- or four-cornered fight with Ms Macapagal, Poe and Lacson.

Mangahas, Poe's first cousin, offered no clear explanation for the actor's "quantum leap."

"Lots of people are looking at the events. Maybe news started to filter out he's going to run. Maybe people got excited. These are all the maybes. I'm just telling you what happened," he said.

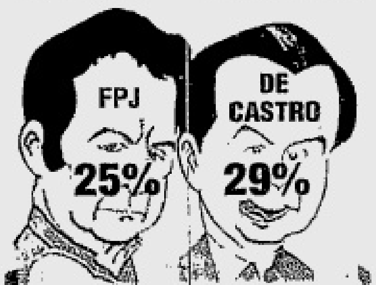
Poe declared on Nov. 26 that he was running.

Asked what the results said about the actor's chances, Mangahas said: "It says he can do it. What more can you read out of these numbers?"

Polistrat chair Jose Leviste Jr. believed some of the supporters of De Castro, Sen. Gregorio Honasan and Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. may have changed their mind when it became apparent that Poe

FPJ/ A4

FIRST CHOICE FOR



President		Vice President	
DE CASTRO	24%	LEGARDA	23%
ROCO	18%	MAGSAYSAY	11%
GMA	17%	HONASAN	10%
LACSON	10%	FLAVIER	10%
UNDECIDED	6%	DRILON	5%
		BARBERS	4%
		FERNANDO	3%
		UNDECIDED	6%

ALISYON NG NAGKAKAISANG P

ALL HANDS on deck for the political opposition which signed a covenant of national unity on Wednesday in preparation for the May '04 elections. (Seated) Pwersa ng Masa president, Horacio "Boy" Morales (2nd from left), Sen.Edgardo Angara, LDP president and PDP-Laban's Salvador Pangilinan.

ERIK ARAZAS

2 opposition standard-bearers seen

By Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac

THREE opposition parties have merged for the 2004 elections, but the continued bickering suggests that the so-called united opposition could end up with two standard-bearers.

Ignoring threats of expulsion from his party mates, Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, led his faction in overseeing the merger of the LDP, PDP-Laban and Joseph Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino at the Manila Hotel yesterday morning. The new alliance is called the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Apparently in protest, the other faction of the LDP led by Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino, party secretary general, prepared to nominate Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson today as LDP standard-bearer at a ceremony to be held at the Club Filipino in San Juan.

Lacson told reporters at a press conference in the Senate that he and his LDP supporters were not breaking away from the party. He said the proclamation was just a "nomination" of the party, but quickly added that by "the party," he meant an "Angara-less LDP."

He also described the three-party merger as "obviously" a coalition made for

2 OPPOSITION/ A8

Erap-FPJ comparison unfair—Tito

ELECTING another movie star for president after Joseph Estrada need not be a disaster, Vice President Teofisto "Tito" Guingona Jr. said yesterday.

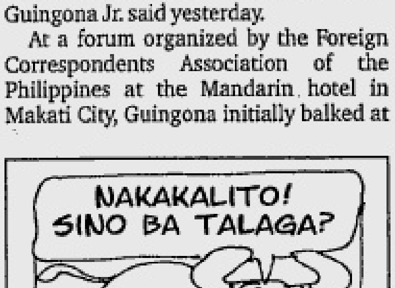
At a forum organized by the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines at the Mandarin hotel in Makati City, Guingona initially balked at commenting on a possible presidency for Fernando Poe Jr., also known as "Da King" of Philippine movies. "I don't want to think about it," he said.

But when asked if a Poe presidency would be a disaster for the country, Guingona said: "No, not necessarily."

Guingona also said that Poe had every right to run for president, and that comparing him to his disgraced buddy was "unfair."

Even Estrada, who was ousted in 2001 and who is now standing trial for plunder, had "the potential" to become a good leader, Guingona said.

ERAP-FPJ/ A8


NAKAKALITO!
SINO BA TALAGA?

Who's speaking for whom, what

By Juliet Javellana

WILL the real presidential spokesperson please speak up?

Michael Defensor is President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesperson. Heherson Alvarez is the ruling party's spokesperson.

Together, Alvarez and Defensor

WHO'S/ A4

Lawmen bag No. 5 in list of kidnap gang leaders

By Christian V. Esguerra

ANOTHER one down. Eight more to go.

Police on Tuesday captured Vilmor Catamco, who was listed as the fifth most wanted kidnapper in the country by the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf), in Masbate province.

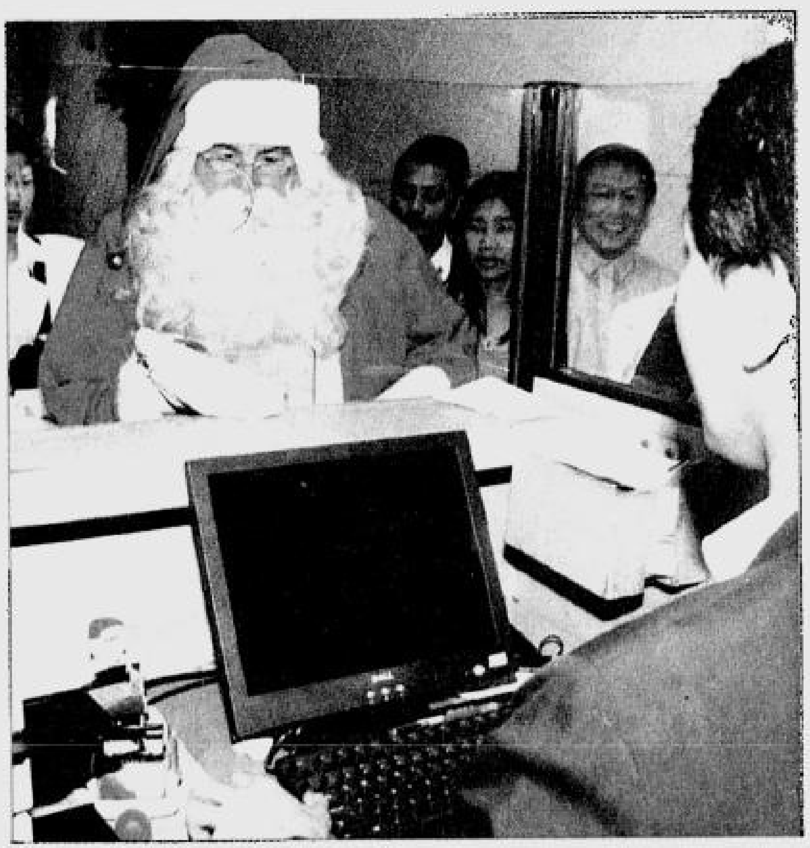
Catamco's arrest brought to eight the remaining leaders in the Top 10 list of kidnap gangs being hunted by the task force. The most wanted in the order of battle, Dr. Roberto Obeles Yap, was killed during an encounter with lawmen in Dinalupihan town in Bataan on Nov. 20.

On Monday, former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Naktaf chief, released pictures of the most wanted kidnap gang leaders in the country and offered a bounty ranging from P500,000 to P1 million for information leading to their capture.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday vowed to stop the rash of kidnappings, a day after armed kidnappers snatched a 2-year-old boy on his way to a Manila nursery school. It was the third high-profile abduction in two weeks and drew calls from the Chinese community for help from overseas.

"There is no need for foreign assistance because we are not dealing with transnational crime syndicates," the President said in a statement. "We shall stamp out kidnapping and I seek the people's continuing

LAWMEN/ A8



NO SNOW IN RP, SO, NO SLEIGH
Santa Claus travels by plane from Finland to Manila, his papers checked by immigration officer Fernando Tendenilla. But he's still a red-hot treat for children at the 3rd World Bazaar Festival starting today till the 14th at the World Trade Center.

ROGER MARGALLO

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over Eastern Luzon and Mindanao.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/04/03

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

NPA rebs now collecting fees from candidates

By TJ Burgonio

THE MILITARY yesterday said communist rebels have started going around homes of "probable" candidates in Luzon to extort huge sums in exchange for a permit to campaign freely in rebel strongholds.

"We have already received reports that the NPAs (New People's Army rebels) have started demanding big amounts of extortion money from probable candidates in Luzon," said Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, military chief information officer.

The permit-to-campaign fee depends on the position being sought by the candidates, he said, noting that the asking fee for governor is P500,000; congressman, between P300,000 and P500,000; and city mayor, between P50,000 and P300,000.

In the absence of cash, the rebels would settle for firearms, such as eight M-16 rifles instead of P500,000 or four M-16 rifles, instead of P300,000, according to Lucero.

Supporting rebs

Lucero noted that in previous elections, the collection of the permit-to-campaign fee was rampant in Quezon province, Compostela Valley in southern Mindanao, and Bicol region, where the NPA rebels maintain strong "political influence."

"They do this every election time," he told reporters.

Apart from intensifying its pursuit operations against the rebels to curb this illegal practice, the military is enjoining candidates to desist from yielding to the rebels' demand for such fees, Lucero said.

"We would like to remind those who are giving in to these demands of the NPAs that this is tantamount to supporting the movement, and they just don't know the ends of these communists," he said.

PNP too politicized, police general laments

By Christian V. Esguerra

A TOP police official who was sidelined in the recent sweeping revamp of the Philippine National Police yesterday warned that the PNP had become "highly politicized" and that the lack of professionalism in its ranks could "breed rebellion."

Deputy Director Gen. Reynaldo Velasco yesterday bowed out as chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, having been transferred to the low-key post of chief of the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime in the top-to-bottom PNP revamp announced last Monday.

During turnover rites at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig, Velasco said he was leaving the NCRPO "with a heavy heart" as it was still in the thick of the fight against criminality.

"A general is trained to fight and win wars and never to abandon his men at a moment when the war can go either way," he said in a speech.

Velasco said he wanted to believe that politics had nothing to do with the reshuffle as both the PNP and the Armed Forces were already "highly politicized."

"It is a dangerous trend because when politics seeps into the armed services, it erodes professionalism in the ranks … It sows the seeds of dissent and dissension … It breeds rebellion," he said.

VELASCO

Velasco's transfer to a non-PNP post was among the most controversial in the top-to-bottom revamp.

At least two senior police officials have told the INQUIRER that Velasco's appointment to the PCTC, which is under the Office of the President, was done to ease him out of contention in the race to succeed PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Velasco, one of only three three-star police generals, reportedly fell out of favor after his patron, former executive secretary Renato de Villa, withdrew support from President Macapagal-Arroyo and joined the camp of former Sen. Raul Roco, who is one of those running against the President in 2004.

The Association of Chiefs of Police of the Philippines Inc. (ACPPI) yesterday scoffed at the PNP revamp.

ACPPI chief Guillermo Domondon criticized the PNP leadership for announcing last Monday the immediate revamp of 32 PNP positions, only to freeze 17 of the new appointments the following day.

Camp Crame insiders claimed that Malacañang had issued a freeze order on the 17 positions after influential PNP officers affected by the changes lobbied to keep their posts.

"We hope this new *'laban-bawi'* [forwards and backwards] of designation and assignment is not a novel precedent," Domondon said in a statement.

"It is simply not right, not even politically correct. We are not worried, we are very worried," he said.

Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, the newly appointed PNP information officer, denied that there was any politics involved in the revamp.

"We have a process and the process was followed," he told reporters.

He said those officers affected by the revamp should just follow the chain of command since these were legal orders.

Bayan Muna Rep. Crispin Beltran said Malacañang's dithering over the PNP revamp showed the weakness of its resolve to reform the police organization.

He said some PNP officials not only needed to be reassigned but have to be sacked outright.

"Certain officials of the PNP and other law enforcement agencies should not just be subjected to revamp, but should be stripped of their positions, among them PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.," Beltran said in a statement.

"The officials of the PNP are just being recycled. It's a merry-go-round process where they just change horses, and the riders remain the same. Corruption and inefficiency go hand and hand," he added.

Beltran said that unless radical and thorough reforms are initiated in the PNP, its performance will always border on the mediocre. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

Criteria Required for Presidential Candidates

A TIME TO REFLECT - Part 6

ISSUE: Our political system has not been responsive to the needs of the people. This has resulted in the accumulation of extremely difficult problems over the last 50 years. The consequence is a people desperate and disillusioned, losing faith in democratic institutions, and having a grim outlook.

This is the situation our people are facing today.

Thus, it becomes a matter of urgency and survival that the people be able to choose wisely our next President, using three major criteria:

INTEGRITY: This is more than simple honesty. It is holding to one's principles in doing what is moral and right regardless of overwhelming odds. It is saying NO to graft and corruption. NO to bribes. NO to influence peddlers and political contributors.

COMPETENCE: This means that the President must have adequate education and experience in public office and must be able to immediately address the most complex problems of the country - peace and order, kidnapping, population explosion, rising unemployment, deteriorating educational system, growing budget deficit, and loss of competitiveness in our agricultural and industrial sectors.

CHARISMA: The President must be able to inspire, unite all our people, and convince us to make sacrifices for the common good. Charisma is more than popularity. It is credibilty. It is strong leadership.

If you agree with these criteria, grade the presidential candidates by giving a maximum of 35% for integrity, 35% for competence and 30% for charisma.

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CARP to get only ₱17B of ₱38-B Marcos deposits

By Cynthia D. Balana

ONLY part of the $682 million forfeited Marcos Swiss bank deposits will go to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program under the terms of the P864.8-billion proposed national budget for 2004, which was approved on second reading by the House of Representatives late Tuesday.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said CARP will be given a total of P17.3 billion from the proceeds of the P38 billion deposits, part of the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos which the Supreme Court forfeited in favor of the government.

Under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, proceeds from the recovered Marcos assets are to go to agrarian reform.

But according to Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, only a portion of the Marcos deposits has been allocated to CARP in the 2004 budget because some P10 billion would be used to compensate more than 9,000 victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime.

Of the P17.3 billion for CARP, P3.6 billion will be used to pay for the interest and redemption of maturing Land Bank bonds.

Awaiting action

The remaining P13.7 billion will be used to acquire 250,000 hectares of new land for distribution to farmers and provide assistance to farmers in some 300 agrarian reform communities (ARCs).

Rosales, who chairs the House human rights committee handling the proposed law seeking to use part of the recovered deposits to compensate human rights victims, said President Macapagal-Arroyo has agreed to set aside a portion of the Marcos assets for this purpose.

While the compensation bill is awaiting enactment, Rosales said she has asked the President to issue an executive order that would set aside at least P10 billion from the Marcos deposits for the rights victims.

The compensation bill, which has been approved on second reading, is now awaiting plenary action.

Rosales said Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales has promised that the measure will be taken up next week once the budget measure is approved on third and final reading.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said that plenary deliberations on the budget measure were rushed by congressmen after the House threw out the second impeachment case against Chief Justice Hilario Davide.

Marie Hilao Enriquez, the leader of the Karapatan human rights group, said the claimants would prefer that the $683 million be kept in a trust fund while proposed amendments to the CARL are being awaited.

"We were not born yesterday. This will really be used for the coming elections," Enriquez said.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan said in an earlier interview that his department's share of the Marcos loot would be used for the benefit of the agrarian reform communities.

He dismissed allegations that the money would be used for any form of electioneering. *With reports from Norman Bordadora and Philip C. Tubeza*

Danding: Who he?

WHO IS accused Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and why is he getting special treatment from the courts?

This was the question raised by prosecutors yesterday as they opposed another petition filed before the Sandiganbayan by the influential businessman to travel abroad. Prosecutor Raymundo Julio A. Olaguer said Cojuangco had consistently managed to win 90-day leaves to travel abroad from the first division of the anti-graft court, where he is facing graft charges in connection with alleged ill-gotten wealth cases of the Marcoses.

Olaguer, in a Dec. 2 motion, noted the "consistent unbroken continuity" with which Cojuangco has been asking and has been granted for permission to travel abroad.

"Hence, while other accused, lesser beings as they seem to be, are allowed not more than 30 days to travel, accused Cojuangco is given the preferential period of 90 days," he said.

Noting the "incessant renewal" of Cojuangco's permission to travel, "the resultant effect is that he is actually not barred from leaving the country at any one time."

He added: "Who is accused Eduardo M. Cojuangco, Jr. to be given such comfort? After all, he is just an accused among the thousands of other accused in this honorable court."

Meralco has to wait in line for tax refund—BIR

By Clarissa S. Batino

UNLIKE Malacañang, the Bureau of Internal Revenue is not in hurry to please the Lopezes who control Metro Manila's sole power distributor Manila Electric Co.

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. yesterday said that Meralco would have to wait in line if it wanted the government to refund its income tax payments estimated at P9 billion.

"We could not refund immediately. If they want a refund, we have to verify first if they have a basis for their claims. And they have to queue for that given that Congress allocates only P750 million yearly for tax refunds," Parayno said in an interview.

Last week, the government granted Meralco's bid for a 12-centavo per kilowatt-hour rate increase starting January next year, raising suspicions that it was part of a political deal between the Lopezes and Malacañang.

Meralco is the country's largest electricity distributor with more than four million household and industrial customers in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange the other day, Meralco said that it filed its tax claims before the BIR on Nov. 27.

Meralco is claiming a tax rebate of P9 billion from the BIR after it was ordered by the Supreme Court to refund consumers P29 billion in excess charges from February 1994 to April 30, 2003.

According to Parayno, Meralco could instead file for tax credits that would allow it to credit its claims against its tax liabilities. Again, he stressed, any demand for tax credit would have to be studied and assessed first by the BIR.

The BIR commissioner said that while Meralco may be entitled to a tax rebate, it could also be liable for taxes on interest earnings it may have received from holding the P29-billion excess charges since 1994.

Parayno has formed a team to assess the accuracy of the P9-billion tax claim of Meralco and to study the tax liabilities of Meralco on interest gains.

He said whatever amount the government may pay Meralco could be offset by tax collections from its customers who would have to pay their tax dues after any refund or tax credit to be given the Lopez-controlled power distributor.

The BIR, he said, would run after consumers that would benefit from the Meralco refund.

Parayno said that the BIR had asked the power firm to provide a list of the beneficiaries of the refund. Large electricity users are likely to get a substantial refund and the amount, said Parayno, would be taxed.

The BIR would determine which consumers would benefit largely from the refund and should, thus, be taxable.

Senators revive Jose Pidal probe

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE SENATE yesterday officially revived the inquiry into the controversial Jose Pidal accounts after a resolution signed by 12 senators was unanimously adopted by the plenary.

Senate President Franklin Drilon directed the Senate committees on banks, chaired by Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, and constitutional amendments, chaired by Sen. Edgardo Angara, to continue with the stalled hearings.

Sen. Joker Arroyo, the chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, the lead committee in the joint Pidal investigation, did not register a dissenting vote to Resolution No. 722 introduced by Osmeña.

Arroyo has been adamant against continuing the Pidal probe because Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who had accused First Gentleman Mike Arroyo of allegedly laundering campaign contributions for the President in dummy Jose Pidal accounts, failed to submit the evidence to support his charges.

The resolution authorized the two committees to "conduct, jointly or separately, an inquiry in aid of legislation into the Jose Pidal controversy and all matters in connection with or incidental to the same."

Arroyo said he was very happy to let the two committees, which took a secondary role in the investigation, take over the probe so he would "be relieved of this problem."

But he reminded his colleagues that approving the resolution would "destroy" the committee system in the chamber.

He said yesterday's resolution in effect meant that if a committee dissents from a resolution of the lead committee in an investigation, the senators can file a resolution asking that they be allowed to conduct their own investigation, supplanting an existing resolution and referring the matter to another committee.

A triumphant Osmeña clarified that the two committees were "not trying to remove from the blue ribbon committee [its] own authorization."

He said they were just "widening the scope of investigation to include two other committees, which will be co-equal in the conduct of [their] own hearings."

Administration Sen. Juan Flavier and Majority Leader Loren Legarda voted with the 10 minority senators to approve the Osmeña resolution.

Arroyo said in an interview he felt relieved that he would not "be pressed to agree to rule favorably on a popular but unfortunately unconstitutional act."

He said that as chair of the lead probe committee he sustained the "right to privacy" invoked by the First Gentleman and his younger brother Ignacio during the two hearings conducted by the joint committees.

He showed the INQUIRER the 118 pieces of evidence submitted by Lacson to the joint committees.

"The evidence do not demonstrate that tons of money found its way into the Jose Pidal account. Where are these tons of money?" asked Arroyo.

He stressed that his committee had asked for and has been waiting for Lacson's so-called "voluminous documents and written testimonies of witnesses that would prove that tons of money have been delivered and are being delivered to a powerful man."

Arroyo insisted that the blue ribbon committee did not close the Pidal joint investigation.

"It simply ruled that when evidence is submitted that would show that public funds or funds that came from illegal sources such as drug money, jueteng money, or dirty money were deposited in the Jose Pidal account, hearings can be resumed," he said.

He compared the process to what happened during the aborted impeachment trial of ousted President Joseph Estrada. He said the House prosecutors first established that government funds and illegal gambling money were channeled to the Jose Velarde account allegedly belonging to Estrada.

"After having established the ownership of the Velarde account ... we asked for the opening of the account, the second envelope. The prosecution never called President Estrada to testify against himself. We did that through independent testimony, that of Clarissa Ocampo and Manuel Curato," said Arroyo who was one of the prosecutors in the Estrada impeachment.

A lawyer for the First Gentleman said the Jose Pidal investigation was being used by the Lacson camp to shore up Lacson's faltering presidential candidacy which has been eclipsed by the announcement by movie star Fernando Poe Jr. that he was running in 2004.

Lawyer Jess Santos said the resumption of the investigation was "an act of desperation" by Lacson. *With a report from Alcuin Papa*

Guingona hits Palace spying; Golez denies it

By Jerome Aning

VICE President Teofisto Guingona Jr. yesterday accused the group of National Security Adviser Roilo Golez of spying on his activities and linking him and his nationalist advocacy group Bangon! Movement to destabilization plots against the government.

"I hope the intelligence community will stop this black propaganda against us. They have no right to spy on me. I have not done anything wrong. Their allegations are baseless, malicious, and malevolent," he said.

Guingona also deplored reports that government intelligence agents were spying on his activities and were "feeding President Macapagal-Arroyo malicious information" that his group were plotting to overthrow her government.

"It is disturbing, distressing, and deplorable that President Arroyo is reportedly being told by her not too imaginative, so-called intelligence operatives that Tito Guingona is engaged in treasonous acts," he told a news forum of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP).

But Golez yesterday flatly denied Guingona's allegations that he was spying on him on suspicion that he was recruiting people for a coup.

"The Vice President must have been misquoted or misinformed when he stated that the government is spying on him," he said in a phone interview.

Golez said there was no need for the government to spy on Guingona, noting that his activities were always reported in the media. "He is a very open person and all we need to do is read about him in the newspapers or watch or listen to the news," he said.

Guingona theorized that the intelligence community might have thought that Bangon! could expose the further ineptitude of the administration.

He urged the government to instead use its intelligence funds to go after crime syndicates. "They should spend their intelligence funds against syndicated crimes and criminals instead of me."

Reports earlier quoted "Malacañang intelligence sources" as saying that government was watching the activities of 'Bangon!' which was allegedly plotting to overthrow the government.

The report said Guingona and former executive secretary Renato de Villa, founder of the Reforma Party, met with two retired generals in October to discuss "ways and means of dislodging Mrs. Arroyo from Malacañang, as they are said to be convinced that the elections will be manipulated by the Palace to ensure for Mrs. Arroyo a presidential victory."

Guingona admitted meeting De Villa and other individuals at his residence in New Manila, Quezon City last Oct. 16, and not Oct. 18 as allegedly reported by Malacañang intelligence agents.

"There was nothing secret nor sinister about the breakfast gathering of friends," the vice president said.

Those present in the meeting were former agriculture secretary and Reporma vice chair Roberto Sebastian, former National Food Authority administrator Jose Mari Gerochi, former University of the Philippines-College of Law dean Merlin Magallona, lawyer Ricardo Nepomuceno, the vice president's chief of staff Jimmy Guerrero, and spokesman Danilo Venida.

With report by TJ Burgonio

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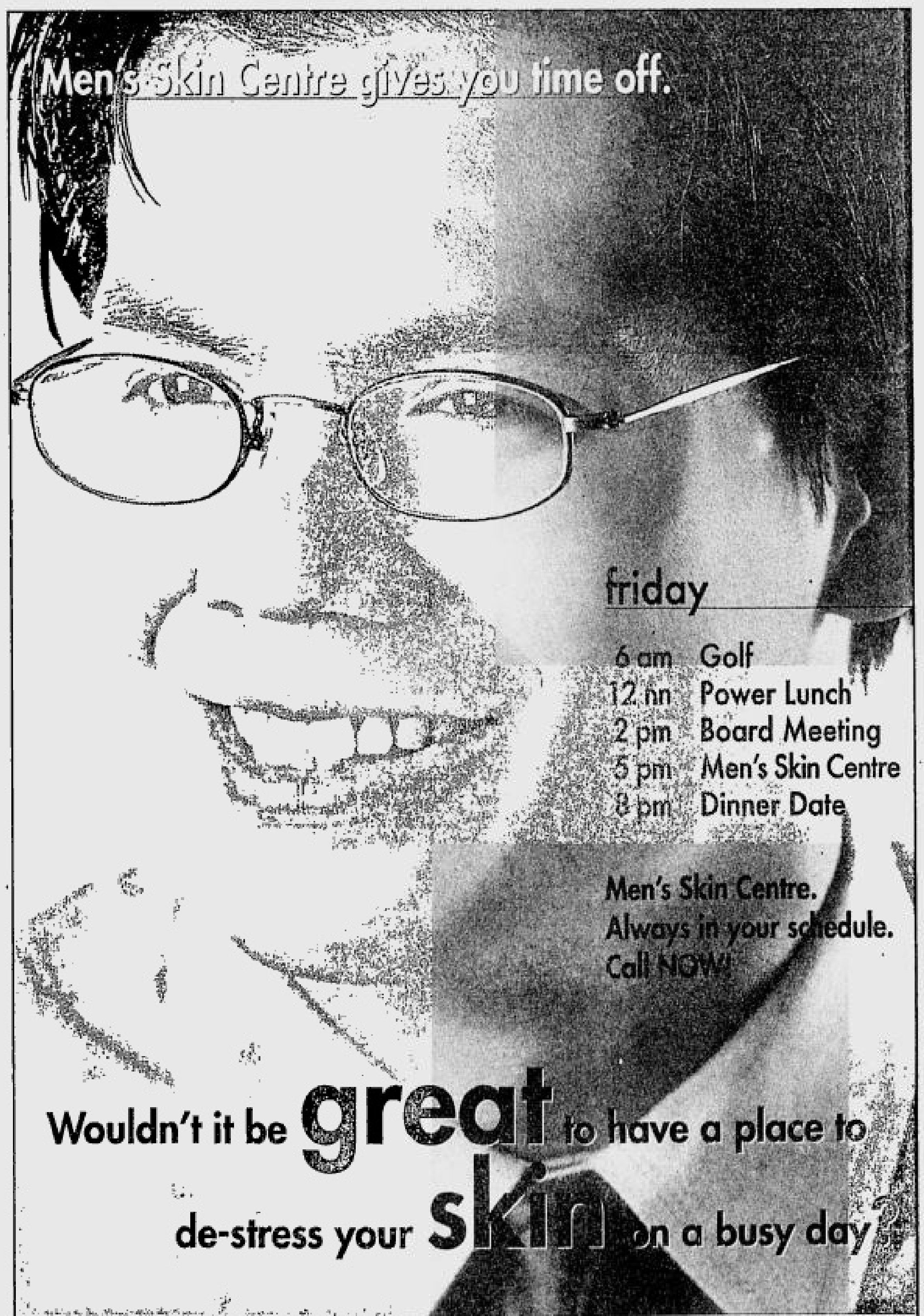

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Mangahas, FPJ first cousins

By Dona Pazzibugan

SOCIAL Weather Stations president Mahar Mangahas said his relation with presidential contender Fernando Poe Jr. would not get in the way of his work.

He and the actor are first cousins.

Poe's mother, Elizabeth Kelley, an American, is the sister of Mangahas' mother, Ruby.

At a press briefing yesterday on the latest SWS survey, Mangahas brushed off questions about how his relation with Poe could affect the credibility of his surveys.

"I have nothing to say to that. We've been conducting surveys long before. He has no connection with us," he said in Filipino.

He said he was not concerned about any forthcoming criticisms.

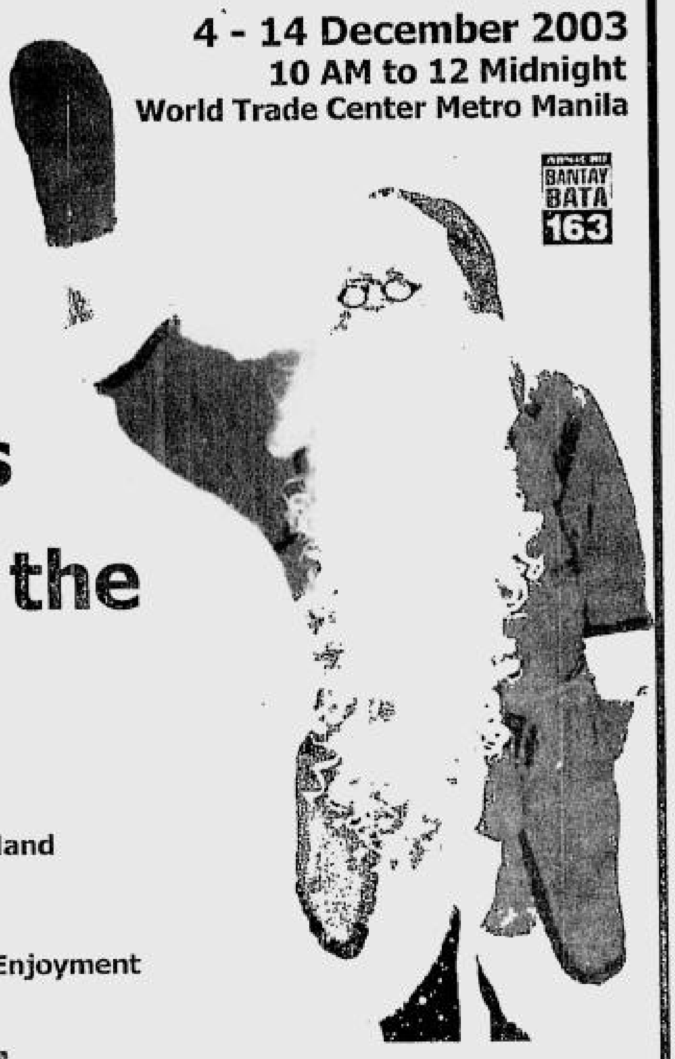
"It depends if the criticism makes sense. Maybe I do not need to defend myself anymore," he said.

Mangahas said his relation with Poe did not influence the conduct of SWS surveys. "He knows that."

The SWS president said his cousin did not even ask his advice before deciding to join the political fray.

But Managahas admitted he was "very close" to the movie star. "We're very close. We're friends. Of course, we respect each other," he said.

Mangahas said Poe was not told in advance of the survey results, which showed the actor leading the presidential race.



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FPJ, Noli neck and neck in poll

From page A1

was running. *(See related story on Page A1.)*

Honasan and Guingona were included in the SWS's September survey.

Among the five candidates, only Poe gained ground. In September, Poe was at fourth place with 14 percent of the votes. De Castro then had 28 percent, followed by Roco with 20 percent, Ms Macapagal, 17 percent and Lacson, 10 percent.

Lacson can't catch up

Political analyst Tony Gatmaitan, who was invited by SWS to the briefing, said it was "not possible anymore" for Lacson to catch up and take the lead.

"This survey is devastating for him," he said.

Those rooting for Lacson have remained at 10 to 12 percent since June, according to Mangahas.

"We're just scoring. [Lacson's votes are] not moving. Whoever says it's going to go up, give us the reasons. We're not seeing signs of it," he said.

SWS said the main source of the voters' swing for Poe was Luzon, excluding Metro Manila.

Poe cornered 30 percent of the votes, overtaking previous leader De Castro who got 24.

Roco was still leading in Metro Manila with 27 percent, followed by Poe with 19 percent.

Ms Macapagal was strong in the Visayas with 30 percent, followed by Poe and De Castro, each with 23 percent.

De Castro was the strongest candidate in Mindanao with 31 percent, followed by Poe with 21 percent.

"Elections are an emotional exercise, not an intellectual exercise. I guess that explains the FPJ phenomenon. That's how it is all over the world," Gatmaitan said.

De Castro doesn't mind that he is now behind Poe.

"Congrats. I hope that will be translated into votes," said the senator.

He said the drop in his rating could be due to rumors that he would be the running mate of Ms Macapagal. "That's possible because there are groups portraying me as a VP. I don't know their intentions," he said.

Race for VP

In the vice presidential survey, Legarda cut De Castro's lead to only six points. De Castro got 29 percent, from 37 percent last September. Legarda got 23 percent, a jump from her 15 percent last September.

Sen. Ramon "Jun" Magsaysay Jr. ranked third with 11 percent, followed by Honasan and Sen. Juan Flavier, 10 percent; Senate President Franklin Drilon, 5 percent; Sen. Robert Barbers, 4 percent; and Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, 3 percent.

"De Castro is still leading but Legarda has moved up quite up a lot," Mangahas said.

Media power

Leviste said the strong showing of Poe, De Castro and Legarda proved the power of the media.

"We're a star-struck people ... We're attracted to celebrities. The strongest political parties now are (TV networks) ABS-CBN, GMA 7 and soon ABC-5," he said.

"If GMA and Roco join forces, they will be a formidable force, the same way an FPJ-Lacson team will be formidable," Leviste suggested.

Mangahas said that even if De Castro did not run for president, it would not necessarily improve Ms Macapagal's chances.

He said most of De Castro's supporters would go for either Poe or Roco if the broadcaster would not run.

The SWS survey found that satisfaction with the President's performance was an important factor in the people's decision support her.

Among those satisfied with her performance, 32 percent said they would vote for Ms Macapagal; 23 percent for De Castro, 18 percent for Poe, 17 percent for Roco and 5 percent for Lacson.

The survey showed that 43 percent were "dissatisfied" with the President's performance compared with only 40 percent in September.

Factors for decline

Among the factors for the decline were Ms Macapagal's decision to seek a full term in office in May and charges of corruption against her husband, according to SWS.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents were against her decision to reverse an earlier pledge to bow out of politics.

The fall in the Preident's ratings was also due to a perception among those polled that accusations of graft against her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, could be true, SWS said.

The President had dismissed allegations by Lacson that her husband had laundered millions of pesos in campaign funds.

Davide, all-time low

The latest survey by SWS also showed that Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.'s rating was at an all-time low, with only 39 percent of those polled satisfied with his performance.

A group of congressmen failed in a bid to impeach Davide last month over corruption allegations in a standoff that threatened to plunge the country into a constitutional crisis. Davide had denied the allegations.

Malacañang remains upbeat on Ms Macapagal's chances in next year's elections despite faring poorly in the latest SWS survey.

Not alarmed

Housing chief Michael Defensor, spokesperson for the President's campaign, said he was not alarmed by the results of the survey because it came at a time when the President was facing her most politically turbulent period, specifically the emotionally charged debate on the impeachment of Davide.

Defensor said all institutions involved in the Davide impeachment issue, whether for or against, suffered a decline in rating. "The President had to take a position that, albeit unpopular, has solved the crisis."

He said that while the President got lambasted, other presidential rivals, like Poe and Roco, were unscathed during the period.

'Mere survey'

The surveys should present different results when the final stage has been set and where every candidates are scrutinized and tested, according to Defensor.

He said the presidential race should not be equated with a mere survey. He said that while a majority disagreed with the President's change of heart, voters were unlikely to make their choice based on a candidate's "one act" but on the totality of what he or she had to offer in terms of leading the country.

This is why he does not find it absurd that De Castro may end up as the President's running mate even though the former ranked higher in the survey. "We only give 30 percent to 'winnability,' we also consider integrity and track record in forming our team for 2004," Defensor said. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and AFP*

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Who's speaking . . .

From page A1

yesterday held a press appearance to make the distinctions between what or who they are speaking for, to dispel the notion that a turf war is going on and to hug each other.

All's well that didn't start out quite right.

Defensor had said Alvarez was not speaking for the President or the ruling party. Alvarez had retorted that Defensor was "too young" and lacked political sophistication.

At the press conference, Defensor acknowledged that the former senator could speak for Lakas-CMD.

"I hope this will dispel the talk or rumor about a turf war. As you know, I have high respect and regard for (former) Senator Alvarez and many of you don't know this but (he) is like a father to me," Defensor said while Alvarez looked on. Defensor meant "political father."

Returning the compliment, sort of, Alvarez said Defensor could be a "pillar of Lakas" even if he was a member of the Liberal Party.

"I don't see any difficulty working with Mike because we are reinforcing our communication system,'" Alvarez said.

No separate campaign

Alvarez said there would be no separate campaign for Ms Macapagal by Malacañang and Lakas-CMD.

But after getting their act together, Defensor got himself in hot water when he hinted in a radio interview that there was a chance the President could still change her mind about running in the May 2004 elections.

In a dwIZ interview, Defensor was asked if the President was open to withdrawing her candidacy in order to achieve her desire for peace and reconciliation.

"Hindi ko naman inaalis...at hindi ko naman hinihiling dahil sa tingin ko na siya ang nararapat sa darating na halalan, pero hanggat hindi pa nagpa-file ay marami pang pwedeng magbago. Sa katunayan, kahit nag-file na ay nagkakaroon pa rin ng baguhan," he said. (In my opinion, she should win the election. But as long as her candidacy has not been filed, that can still change. The truth is, even if she has filed, there's still the possibility of change.)

Surest formula

The interviewer, former Ambassador Ernesto Maceda, asked Defensor which was more important, the President's desire to get elected or reconciliation and peace. He chose the latter.

"Thank you for admitting that. Now if I tell you that the surest formula for her to reconcile with everybody and for everybody to forgive her is for her not to run, would you consider that as your priority?," Maceda, chair emeritus of the Nationalist People's Coalition and appointee of ousted President Joseph Estrada, asked.

Defensor responded: "Ambassador Maceda, I cannot speak for the President on that. But I think if this would serve the greater national interest, the President would not turn her back on that."

But in the press briefing in Malacañang later, Defensor denied having stated in effect that Ms Macapagal could still withdraw from the race.

Shell, Caltex hike cooking gas price

By Ronnel Domingo

HOUSEHOLDS would have to shell out an additional P16.50 for every 11 kg cylinder of liquefied petroleum gas after Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc. raised yesterday the prices of their LPG by P1.50 per kg.

Roberto Kanapi, Pilipinas Shell manager for external affairs, said the increase was due to a "strong seasonal demand in the region."

He pointed out that international contract prices for LPG surged to $313 per metric ton in December, up by $33 from $280 per ton in November.

The Department of Energy said the latest price increase brought retail prices of LPG to between P267 and P307 per 11-kg cylinder.

In Metro Manila, LPG dealers are charging between P292.50 and P308 for 11 kg of Shellane and P276.50 to P323 for Caltex LPG, the DOE said.

In a statement, the DOE urged consumers, especially households, to buy their cooking gas from companies that have not raised prices.

"The LPG industry is one of the most competitive in the downstream oil sector with about 182 players competing to capture a sizeable market. As of August this year, new industry entrants have (secured) a 37.2-percent market share."

Most of these new players have not raised their prices, the DOE said.

In a related development, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. urged the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries when it meets in Austria on Thursday to carefully consider the impact on oil importing countries of any decision in deliberating the current level of world oil production.

"World oil prices have risen in the last three months when Opec decided in September to reduce production," Perez said. "Any further reduction will imperil the sustained growth of world economies, particularly those of oil importing countries like the Philippines."

The country imports daily about 269.8 thousand barrels of crude oil and 94.6 thousand barrels of finished petroleum products.

Last month, oil companies raised pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene twice for a total of 70 centavos per liter.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 4, 2003
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 26:1-6
Gospel: Mt 7:21; 24-27

Jesus said to his disciples, "Not everyone who says to me: Lord! Lord! will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father.

"So, then, anyone who hears these words of mine and acts accordingly is like a wise man, who built his house on rock. The rain poured, the rivers flooded, and the wind blew and struck that house, but it did not collapse because it was built on rock. But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not act accordingly, is like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain poured, the rivers flooded, and the wind blew and struck that house; it collapsed, and what a terrible fall that was!"

Commentary

It has been said that in matters of practical importance, there is nothing more practical than good theory, good analysis and good preparation. But in the context of Jesus' exhortation, good theory and analysis are grounded on praxis, on doing the will of God. Wisdom is acquired through hearing the Word of Jesus and putting them into practice. The Chinese proverb would say: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Conduct of a judge—In administrative proceedings, the burden of proof that respondent committed the acts complained of rests on the complainant. In the present case, complainant contends that respondent judge caused his arrest on December 12, 1997 on the basis of the already invalidated warrant of arrest dated May 31, 1991 as the case against him had already been dismissed. In *Limbona vs Limbona*, we held that event in an administrative case, the Rules of Court require that if the respondent judge should be disciplined for grave misconduct or any graver offense, the evidence against him should be competent and should be derived from direct knowledge. The judiciary to which the respondent belongs demands no less. Before any of its members could be faulted, competent evidence should be presented, especially since the charge is penal in character. In the present case, we find that complainant failed to discharge the burden of proving the allegations in his complaint by the required quantum of evidence. Nevertheless, the Court agrees with the observation of the Investigating Justice that respondent, under the facts and circumstances of the case, should be admonished to be more circumspect in his official and personal deportment. Upon being shown a copy of the alias warrant of arrest, he should have advised Sandalo to go to the sala of Judge Burgos who had issued the same so as to avoid any misapprehension against him (respondent) as what happened in this case. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Austria-Martinez, Second Division, Ejercito vs Suerte, A.M. No. RTJ-99-1501. September 3, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

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Bishops back Namfrel bid for election quick count

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE CATHOLIC Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday rallied behind the private poll watchdog National Movement for Free Elections which is seeking accreditation for a quick count in the 2004 elections.

In a letter to officials of the Commission on Elections, Bishop Dinualdo Gutierrez, head of the CBCP National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace said that allowing the Namfrel to conduct a vote count would boost [illegible] [illegible]libility of the Comelec and the elec[illegible] [illegible]esults.

"Good governance is a common goal shared by civil society and government ... Broad public participation is necessary in ensuring that the elections are peaceful and its results credible," Gutierrez said.

The letter was distributed to other bishops, parishes and religious groups to gather support for the Namfrel.

The Comelec has yet to accredit the Namfrel for a vote count despite earlier pronouncements from Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos that the Namfrel would be allowed to do a quick count as was the practice for the past 14 years.

The Namfrel, however, was allowed only to conduct education and skills training to watchers nationwide for the 2004 elections. The Comelec is still conducting hearings for the quick count.

The Comelec said in its resolution last September that allowing a parallel count would transform Namfrel from a citizens' arm into a watchdog, which would "negate and demolish the Constitutional provisions that hail the independence of the Comelec."

Supplier says it'll take billions of years to crack vote counters

THE CONSORTIUM that won the bidding for the supply of automated counting machines (ACMs) to be used by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) in the May 2004 elections yesterday guaranteed that its machines are highly secure and cannot be hacked because of its advanced security protection.

In fact, according to Alfredo V. Lazaro Jr., spokesperson of the Mega Pacific Consortium (MPC), it will take all the computers in the world billions of years to crack their security key. He made the claim to allay fears that the vote counting machines that the consortium will supply for next year's election can easily be tampered with.

Lazaro, in a press statement, said the machines are provided with encryption technology and digital certificates more secure than those used in international banking and Internet transactions.

He said the vote counting machines use 168-bit Triple Data Encryption Standard (3DES) cryptographic technology and 1024-bit Digital Certificates provided by the world-renowned "VeriSign" technology.

"We are actually using better encryption technology because almost all of the international banking and Internet electronic transactions today are using only 128-bit encryption while we are using the bigger 168-bit for our ACM data encryption," he said.

Nuke launch

"Even our 1024-bit Digital Certificates is of a strength similar to that of US military encryption standard that protect the nuclear missiles launch codes," he stressed.

He said that it would take significantly longer than the estimated 10 to 15 billion years to even get near to cracking the 168-bit key.

"Even if you connect or network all the computers connected in the Internet it will take trillions of years to break the 1024-bit encryption algorithm keys we are using with our ACMs," he added.

"Let's assume for the sake of argument, that someone did manage to intercept and decrypt an electronic transaction, it does not mean that they have found all the private keys," he said. "If they want to decrypt another transaction they would need to spend as much time and effort on the second transaction as they did on the first," he added.

Added security

He said that cracking a message encrypted with such key would need supercomputers and take significantly longer than the age of the universe using convention technology. He said that it would take about 72 million weeks to even break 56-bit medium encryption.

Lazaro also maintained that local election results, in municipal city level, would be known in about 24 hours and in 36 hours for provincial and national election results because of the machine's capability to read 50 ballots per minute.

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Palace to consult business on 'new-look' finance team

MALACAÑANG will consult the business sector on its plan to appoint former Executive Secretary Oscar Orbos and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri as head of the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Finance, respectively.

This was revealed by housing czar and spokesperson for the presidential campaign Michael Defensor who said that some Cabinet members might not opt to vacate their posts as they have changed their mind about running in the 2004 elections.

Defensor said the government's economic team was likely to have a "new look" by next year as the President was still looking for people to fill up the finance post vacated by investment banker Jose Isidro Camacho and the DTI post soon to be relinquished by former Rep. Manuel A. Roxas II who was still contemplating whether to run for vice president or for senator.

Defensor said Malacañang was consulting with the business sector before making any changes because it was important that businessmen support whoever leads the DTI and DOF.

Defensor noted that Neri's appointment is being pushed by several business groups while Orbos was being pushed by a number of prominent business leaders.

Defensor said that some Cabinet members who had planned to run in next year's election were having second thoughts.

Defensor said Interior Secretary Jose Lina and Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit were not running while anti-kidnapping and anti-terrorist czar Angelo Reyes has yet to make up his mind about the elections.

"So far, only Roxas is confirmed to be running next year," Defensor said.

Lina, Dayrit and Reyes were rumored to be interested in an elective post because of their growing visibility in media. *Gil Cabacungan Jr.*

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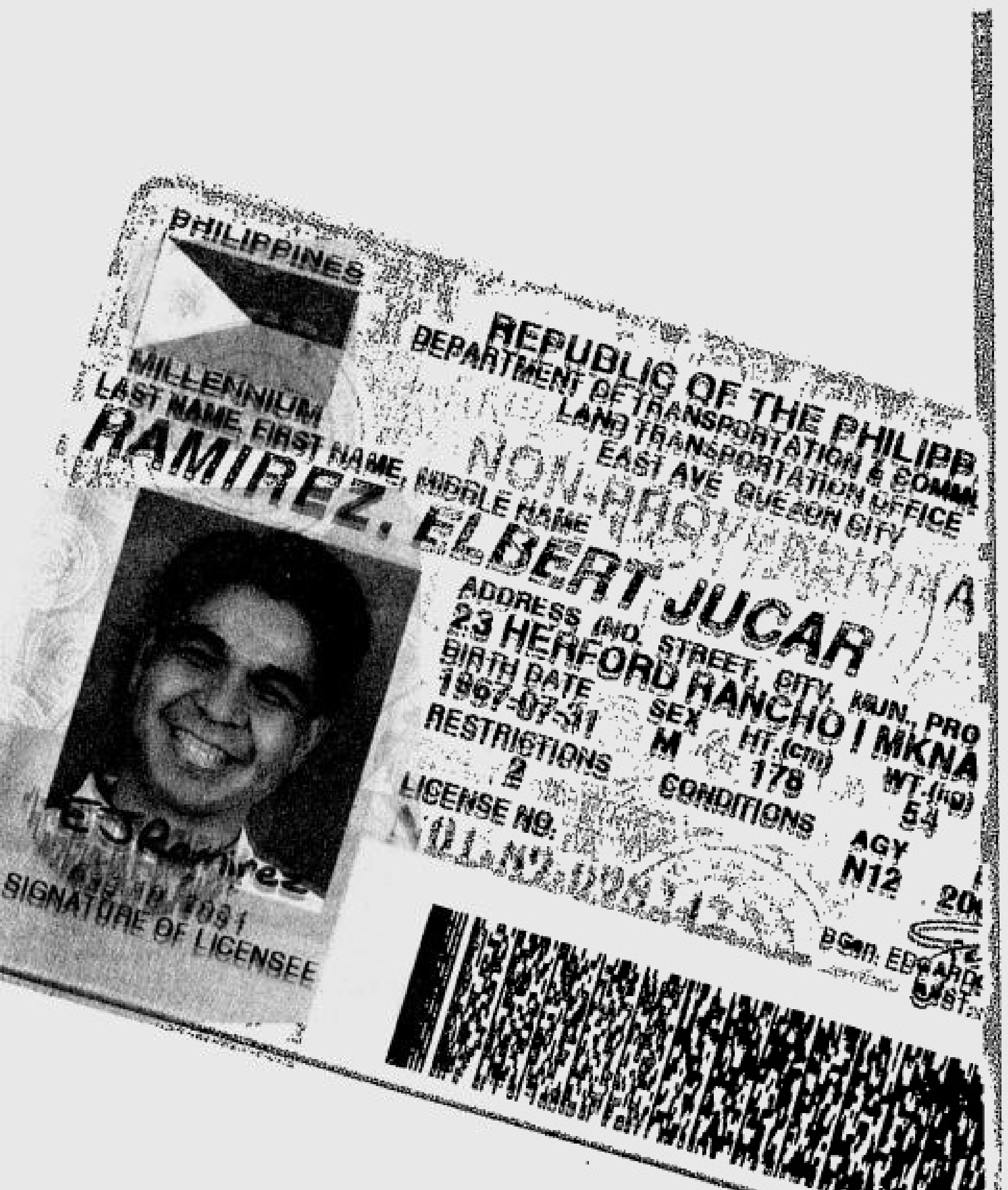

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FPJ closest to Marcoses' heart–Imee

By Carlito Pablo

AMONG the declared presidential aspirants, it's actor Fernando Poe Jr. who is closest to the heart of her family, Rep. Imee Marcos (KBL, Ilocos Norte) said yesterday.

"FPJ is a family friend and a Marcos loyalist," said the eldest child of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

She said her parents stood as principal sponsors at the wedding of Poe and actress Susan Roces. And yet, she pointed out, Poe never asked Malacañang then for favors.

Character

"FPJ also shied away from the Palace during the term of his close friend, President Joseph Estrada," she added. "If this is any indication, it would show the character of FPJ compared to his rivals."

The Marcoses were elated when Estrada won as president in 1998. In an interview shortly after the election, the congresswoman said she and her family were "over the moon."

Yesterday, she said that if her memory served her right, her father and Poe's mother were classmates.

"The Poes come from San Carlos, Pangasinan. They are Ilocanos like us," she said.

First visitors

The Poes are said to be among the first visitors of the Marcoses when they were in exile in Hawaii in the aftermath of the 1986 revolt that toppled the dictatorship.

"At least, if FPJ wins, we'll have another first lady who is very beautiful," gushed Marcos, whose mother Imelda was recently seen with Roces at the inauguration of a housing project for members of the movie industry.

Marcos also said her family was awaiting the results of talks to determine whether Poe or Sen. Panfilo Lacson would serve as the opposition's standard-bearer in 2004.

"We're hopeful that FPJ and Senator Lacson can work it out," she said, and defended Poe from criticism that he lacked the academic credentials to aspire for the presidency.

Using President Macapagal-Arroyo as a point of comparison, Marcos said: "It's true we have a President who has a doctorate in economics. But look where the country is now."

Danding factor

Marcos previously said that businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., a close associate of her father, was instrumental in Poe's decision to run in 2004.

But Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition, the second largest political party next to the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, appears to be keeping its options open until the end of the filing of candidacies on Jan. 2.

"Realignments will be taking place until the last minute and we would like to wait until things settle down," said Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, NPC spokesperson.

The Commission on Elections will start receiving the certificates of candidacies on Dec. 15.

2 opposition standard-bearers seen

From page A1

movie star Fernando Poe Jr.

In a separate interview, Angara, who supports Poe, branded the Lacson faction as a group of "insurgents."

Countered Lacson: "Insurgents *din yon kanina*"—a reference to the Angara faction that had merged with the PDP-Laban and PMP.

"What will happen [today] is exactly what happened [yesterday morning]," Lacson said. "If they say [today's] proclamation is that of insurgent leaders of the party, then what happened [yesterday], which did not have the sanction of the party, was also participated in by insurgents."

At the Manila Hotel, Angara, PMP president Horacio "Boy" Morales and PDP-Laban executive council member Salvador Pangilinan led the signing of two covenants of unity that sealed the merger.

Angara said the formation of the coalition would pave the way for them to move ahead in selecting a standard-bearer.

He said LDP leaders had come up with two proposed methods of selection that he believed would be acceptable to the candidates. He declined to give details.

Expulsion?

Asked about moves to expel him, Angara initially said he did not want to dignify the charges against him because what was important was for the opposition parties to unite for the elections.

He said he was given the mandate of the LDP as early as September to engage in coalition talks with other parties.

"We're all doing this for the sake of the opposition, and I hope that some of those recalcitrants ... would realize that," he said.

Angara later said the "insurgents" would be dealt with. He singled out Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico, who had filed charges against him before the LDP for alleged acts inimical to the party, particularly his vocal support for Poe.

"One of these days, he [Suplico] will be dropped from the rolls for disorderly conduct," Angara warned. "There is time for taking care of disgruntled members."

Angara earlier stripped Suplico of the chairmanship of LDP Western Visayas and gave it to former Aklan Rep. Allen Quimpo.

Angara-Lacson meeting

As if to say that the LDP was not in disarray, Angara disclosed that he and Lacson had met to discuss certain issues, including the selection process.

A source privy to the Tuesday night meeting said it was arranged by a businessman, a mutual friend of Angara and Lacson.

Lacson confirmed that he had met with Angara, and said they discussed the mechanics of the selection process at length.

He said they had an initial agreement but this did not involve the selection process.

Lacson also disclosed that his meeting with Poe originally set for Saturday had been canceled.

He said he got word yesterday from a representative of Poe that the actor was "not prepared" to meet with him.

He also said Poe's camp wanted the two of them to each send a representative to the meeting, and that he had designated Aquino to represent him.

Defending the covenants that were signed by the three parties, the PMP's Morales said: "This is just a necessary process for all those aspiring candidates to work with. We have to set a structure so that we can now proceed in establishing the mechanism in selecting a candidate."

Lacson insisted that his proclamation today would not violate party rules "because it is a party nomination."

He expressed hope that the party infighting would be resolved soon.

Lacson's media relations officers said he would be proclaimed by the LDP, or at least the faction led by Aquino, Suplico and Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra.

Rep. Ronaldo Zamora of the PMP will reportedly also join the proclamation.

Unity before Dec. 15

But an unperturbed Angara said the fragmented opposition would be able to unite before Dec. 15.

"Before today, everybody said the opposition was divided and fractured, that we will never be able to get our act together. We just accomplished our unification today," he said, adding:

"Now that we have accomplished unification, we move on to the next step, which is the selection of the common standard-bearer."

Asked whether that goal was attainable, Angara said: "Again, people are skeptical ... But I tell you, in 10 days, on or before Dec. 15, we will [have] a single candidate."

Ping-Poe tandem

In an interview over dyFM Bombo Radyo, Suplico said his group preferred a "Ping-Poe" tandem for 2004.

He said his group wanted Lacson to be its standard-bearer because it would supposedly be better for the opposition and the country.

"A Ping-Poe team would be very strong," said the House deputy minority leader. "We believe that it should be brains before beauty, and not the other way around."

Suplico said he was disappointed with Angara's "unilateral" preference for Poe. He said only Angara and Sen. Vicente Sotto III were rooting for the actor, who is not an LDP member.

He also said his group had basis to say that Lacson was not only a strong candidate but also a popular one: the results of their in-house survey supposedly showing that the senator was gaining popularity in Luzon and in the Visayas.

"This has become a major reason why we are pushing for Lacson's candidacy," he said.

Suplico said the woes plaguing the LDP would be best settled if the bickering factions would allow Lacson and Poe to iron out the problem by themselves.

He said his group believed that Lacson would be able to convince Poe to be his running mate.

Disillusioned

Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozanno Rufino Biazon urged LDP leaders to stop bickering over the choice of standard-bearer.

"I am calling on senior LDP officials to live up to their duties as responsible models for the younger politicians to emulate," Biazon said.

"The younger generation gets disillusioned with the bickering, maneuvering, unilateral decisions and word wars between officials. They should serve as inspiration rather than turn off the younger members with their antics."

Wrong timing

Biazon said many young LDP congressmen and local officials who joined the party "full of idealism" did not approve of the arbitrary removal of certain party chairs in the provinces and districts and their replacement by members of questionable qualifications.

On the other hand, he said, party members' filing of complaints against each other at this time was a case of wrong timing—an apparent reference to the complaints filed by Suplico and Mitra against Angara. *With reports from Raj Padilla, PDI Visayas Bureau; Cynthia D. Balana in Manila*

Erap-FPJ comparison unfair–Tito

From page A1

"But it seems that his perceptions were influenced by friends whose agenda was not for the good of the nation, but for their own benefit. And they shared the agenda with him, including the profits," Guingona added.

He warned that a Poe presidency could be subject to the same temptations, "but it is unfair to say that [Poe] and Estrada are of the same mold."

Options

The Vice President also said he did not have qualms about show biz personalities being elected to public office, and cited examples of celebrities in the United States who were able to win elections.

He admitted that "one of [his] options was to run" for president, but said without giving details that "circumstances have made [him] decide not to pursue it."

Picked by President Macapagal-Arroyo to be Vice President when she assumed Estrada's post, Guingona fell out with her after she allowed US antiterror troops to be deployed in Mindanao. He eventually quit the Cabinet.

Guingona recently led the formation of the nationalist Bangon! Movement. He said the group would not endorse any candidate and would instead work for clean and honest elections.

PCCI-Poe meeting

It looks like Poe, a no-show at the Saturday forum for the contenders in the presidential election, still has a chance to present his program of government to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

PCCI president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said the leaders of the chamber's 120 chapters would soon meet with Poe to know him and hear him out.

Ortiz-Luis said that while Poe was a "very strong contender *(See banner story)*," he could not as yet assess how PCCI leaders and members regarded the actor.

"We really do not know much about him. And we would like to reserve judgment until we are able to know more about him," Ortiz-Luis told the INQUIRER after attending the induction of officers of the PCCI's Pampanga chapter Tuesday night at the Clark Special Economic Zone.

Getting to know him

The meeting with Poe will be a "getting-to-know-you" occasion, Ortiz-Luis said, adding:

"It's not fair to judge him on the basis of perception, on the basis of no information. I think, to be fair, we will give him a chance to talk about his platform and his plans, to gauge his sincerity."

Ortiz-Luis also pointed out that Poe was qualified to run for president according to the requirements set by the 1987 Constitution.

He said the PCCI would meet with the other presidential aspirants to "make [them] aware that we are watching, that they should have serious propositions on hand, and that they cannot just dance and sing through the elections and expect the people to vote for them."

All-time low

The financial markets wobbled and the peso fell to an all-time low against the dollar last week when Poe, a high school dropout, declared that he would run for president.

Many businessmen fear that his political inexperience would be bad for the economy, and that he would pardon his detained friend. *Reports from AFP; Jerome Aning in Manila; Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Cops still clueless on priest's killing

From page A1

was found by his cousin lying in a pool of blood with multiple stab wounds inside his rented home on Matutom Street, Barangay St. Peter.

The naked body of the priest was found inside the master bedroom which, according to investigators, was a shambles.

They said the case was being treated as robbery with homicide for the time being.

Investigators said the priest's relatives refused to cooperate or talk with the media.

While CPD investigators remained clueless on the priest's killing, the Masbate police tried to establish the motive for the killing of a local broadcaster on Tuesday morning.

GMA: Get killer

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday vowed to punish the killers as she offered her sympathies to the family of Nelson Nadura who was ambushed by two still unidentified gunmen after the broadcaster had aired his regular political radio program in Masbate, an island-province in Bicol known for its political violence.

"These attacks against members of the press shall not go unpunished and the PNP (Philippine National Police) is already on top of the case," Ms Macapagal said, describing attacks against journalists as "heinous crimes of the worst kind" that stifle press freedom.

Ms Macapagal last month offered a P1-million reward for information leading to the arrest of suspects of each murdered journalist in the Philippines in the past five years.

43rd journalist

An average of three journalists are killed every year in the Philippines, and Nadura was the 43rd since democracy was restored in 1986.

Press watchdog Reporters Without Borders separately condemned the killing and urged the Department of Interior and Local Governments to immediately bring Nadura's killers to justice.

NPA angle

The press group said no motive for the killing had been established, but added that colleagues of Nadura believed the New People's Army, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, may be linked to the attack.

Nadura, president of the Union of Press and Broadcast Journalists of Masbate, was a former NPA commander. He surrendered in 1986 and availed himself of the government's amnesty program in the early 1990s.

CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, however, voiced doubts the NPA was behind the killing.

In a statement aired over local radio dzGB-AM yesterday morning, Rosal called on NPA units operating in Bicol to shed light on the killing.

Rosal also urged authorities to look into the political angle, saying Nadura was a hard-hitting commentator at local radio dyME. *Reports from Tina Santos in Manila; and Ronnie Lorejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

An Open Invitation to all

In celebration of the International Children's day—November 20, 2003, Youth Aid 2003: Operation Day's Work, Philippines (Youth Aid ODW) will kick off its campaign to support projects for the promotion on the rights of rural, indigenous, juvenile and terminally-ill children.

Come and join us in this celebration as we launch Youth Aid ODW 2003 during the Social Development Week at the Glorietta Activity Center, Makati City.

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Lawmen bag No. 5 in list of kidnap gang leaders

From page A1

trust and confidence."

A tip from a Masbate resident led to the arrest of Catamco, a member of the Fajardo kidnap gang, at his house in Barangay Kepepe in San Pascual, Masbate.

Ex-Army officer

Catamco, who carried a P900,000 price on his head, is a former Army officer who used to be part of the Armed Forces Civil Relations Service and intelligence units, according to a ranking Philippine National Police official.

Catamco's group operates mainly in Metro Manila and nearby provinces and is behind at least 20 kidnapping cases in the last three years, the official said.

"He's a very big catch," said the official, who refused to be named. "We hope that his arrest would somehow cripple the operations of his group."

Civilian tip

The whereabouts of Catamco were traced after the civilian informant tipped authorities that he was in San Pascual. The informant saw Catamco's picture, together with those of other kidnap suspects, on television on Monday night.

The following day, members of Pacer and the Bicol police applied for a warrant and stormed the fugitive's safe house.

The source said the PNP leadership did not immediately announce Catamco's arrest because interrogators were still trying to identify his handlers.

Catamco was scheduled to be flown to Camp Crame in Quezon City where he was to be presented to PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. yesterday afternoon.

Hard to prove

Acting on the President's directive, police officials were trying to determine if Catamco and his gang had links to personalities who might be out to destabilize the government by staging kidnappings in Metro Manila, the official said.

"It's really hard to prove if the kidnappings were related to any destabilization," he said. "It's very easy to speculate (on this possibility) but it's very hard to prove it."

Clueless

The official, who is directly involved in the PNP's anti-kidnapping operations, said the Naktaf was still clueless on the group behind the abduction of the 2-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in Muntinlupa City the other morning.

The boy's family reportedly clammed up, fearing that he might be killed by his captors.

Adding to the woes of Reyes was the fact that authorities were yet to solve the kidnapping of a Chinese-Filipino girl in Paco, Manila, on Nov. 22. The girl's driver was shot and killed by the kidnappers.

The kidnapping came four days after the abduction and killing of Coca-Cola Export Corp. executive Betti Chua Sy in Quezon City. Her body was found wrapped in a blanket and garbage bag on a seaside road in Parañaque City the following day.

Police have charged 15 people in the kidnapping of Sy, but have yet to catch any suspects in the other cases.

Election time

Minority ethnic Chinese in the Philippines are a common target for kidnap gangs, and abductions tend to rise in the period before Christmas and ahead of elections, which are scheduled for next May.

Leaders of the Chinese-Filipino community, which makes up just one percent of the 82 million population but is prominent in the business world, have said rogue members of the security forces are involved and criticized the government's response as ineffective.

Better paranoid than sorry

Teresita Ang-See, chair of the Citizens Action Against Crime group, said many Chinese were too scared to leave their homes.

"That's a very insane way of living. All of us are paranoid, but we can't do anything about it," Ang-See told radio station dzBB. "It's better to be paranoid than sorry."

She said children were being told to use cellular phones to communicate with their drivers before getting out of school, while many middle-class families were considering leaving the country altogether. With INQUIRER wires

MILF again assures gov't it has no links with JI

By TJ Burgonio

THE SECESSIONIST Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday rejected government claims that it had a tactical alliance with the regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

In a joint statement with a government peace negotiating panel, the MILF said it "has not provided and will not provide any form of assistance, including training, recruitment, material support, safe harbor or sanctuary" to JI militants and other terrorist groups.

Benjie Midtimbang, MILF chair on the coordinating committee on the cessation of hostilities (CCCH), made the assurance to his government counterpart, Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, during a meeting on Tuesday in Davao City.

The secessionist group would continue to "actively deny" JI operatives any access to its territories," Midtimbang added.

The MILF issued the statement after Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita earlier warned the separatist group against maintaining links with the JI, believed to be the Southeast Asian arm of the al-Qaida and responsible for the Bali bombings in Indonesia last year.

Ermita said intelligence reports had indicated that 31 Indonesian JI militants were believed to be training MILF rebels in southern Mindanao and that if it was proven true, peace talks with the rebels could be scrapped.

The MILF said it was "committed to strongly support the government's and the international community's campaign against the JI and similar terrorist groups which are being linked to the MILF and thus adversely affecting the peace process."

Both sides are preparing to resume formal peace negotiations brokered by Malaysia, which has also agreed to send a team to monitor truce violations between the government and the MILF.

Garcia, government chair on the CCCH and Armed Forces vice chief, welcomed the MILF's reiteration of its earlier renunciation of its alleged ties with the al-Qaida-linked group operating in Southeast Asia.

He described this as "a positive step" that would erase doubts on the sincerity of the MILF in the peace negotiations. "This will further remove the doubts by the many sectors on the prospects of the peace process," Garcia said in the joint statement.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had said the government would press ahead with its crackdown on terrorists even if it meant scuttling the long-delayed peace talks with the secessionist group. *With AFP report*

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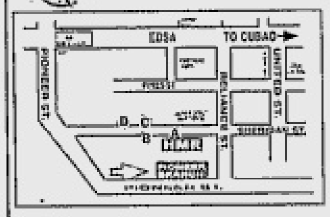

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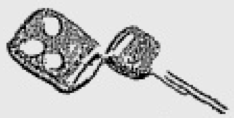
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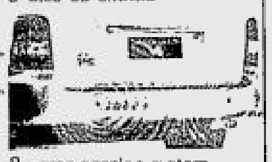
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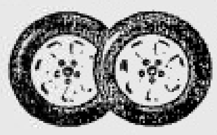
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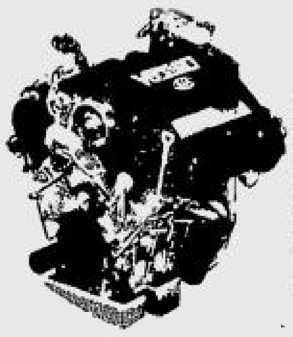

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Taiwan: Referendum to bring peace, not war

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Taiwan's government on Wednesday tried to put a new spin on its plans to hold a "defensive referendum" to protect the island's sovereignty, arguing the vote could bring peace, not war, with rival China.

The government was under new pressure to justify the referendum after the United States—Taiwan's most important friend—warned this week it opposes votes designed to unilaterally change the island's status or move it toward independence.

In Beijing, however, senior Chinese military officers warned Taiwan on Wednesday it was staring into the abyss of war and the mainland was ready for "necessary" casualties if the island pursued its independence drive.

The comments in the state-run Outlook Weekly magazine, carried by the Xinhua news agency and major websites, followed Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's plan to hold a referendum on the island's future.

China and Taiwan separated amid civil war in 1949, and Beijing has warned it will wage war to keep the island from seeking a permanent split with an independence referendum.

But on Wednesday, Taiwan's government spokesperson Lin Chia-lung said that the "defensive referendum"—proposed for the March 20 presidential election—shouldn't provoke China. Lin said it would help China better understand Taiwan, and this would be conducive to better exchanges.

"One aim of a defensive referendum is to lead China into opening dialogue," Lin said, comparing the referendum to confidence-building measures between military rivals.

"The defensive referendum is a referendum to strive for peace, a referendum to maintain the present situation, a referendum to protect Taiwan," Lin said.

Last weekend, Chen surprised many by calling for a referendum to protect Taiwan's sovereignty. He said a new law passed last week gave him the power to call the "defensive referendum" if the island was under imminent threat from China.

Chen has yet to say what the specific ballot issue would be, but officials have said it wouldn't involve the touchy independence issue.

Taiwan's opposition and other critics of the referendum have ridiculed the president's referendum plan, calling it unnecessary.

Two People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers quoted by the Outlook Weekly magazine said Chen would be held responsible if war broke out and said separatists "will be treated the same way war criminals are dealt with elsewhere in the world." *Reports from AP, AFP*

Roh's foes end boycott of parliament

SEOUL—Opposition leaders ended the boycott of South Korea's parliament on Wednesday, saying they would reconvene the following day to override President Roh Moo-hyun's veto of an independent probe into corruption scandals involving his aides.

The move sets the stage for a political showdown between Roh and the opposition-dominated National Assembly, which is determined to make Roh the first president in 49 years whose veto is rejected by parliament.

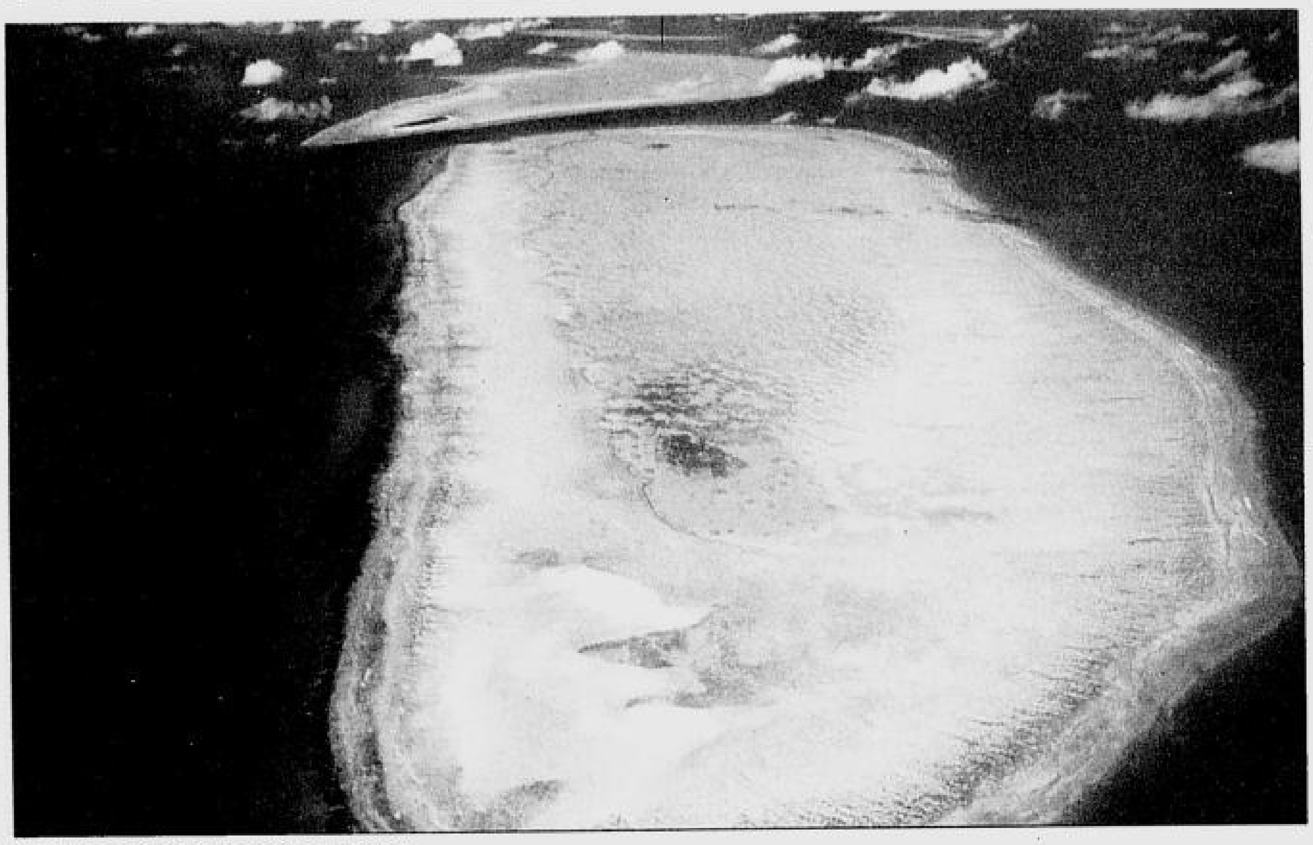
Roh vetoed a bill last week that would have appointed an independent counsel to investigate the scandals. That triggered an opposition boycott of the National Assembly, freezing deliberation on next year's government budget, and the country's plan to send up to 3,000 troops to Iraq to help US forces there.

On Wednesday, the nation's four major political parties agreed to reconvene parliament on Thursday, with all the three opposition parties determined to override Roh.

The three opposition parties control a combined 219 seats in the 272-member Assembly, more than the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto of a parliamentary bill. The bill had passed the National Assembly with more than two-thirds support before it was vetoed by Roh.

Choi Do-sool, Roh's aide for 20 years, was arrested last month and accused of receiving 1.1 billion won (US$956,000) in bribes from SK Group, a scandal-plagued South Korean conglomerate.

Two other former presidential aides, Lee Kwang-jae and Yang Gil-seung, are also accused of accepting bribes and illegal donations for Roh's election campaign last year. They deny any wrongdoing. *AP*



MOST PROTECTED CORAL REEF
The Great Barrier Reef off Australia's northeastern coast will become the world's most protected coral reef system under a plan unveiled by Canberra on Dec. 3. A third of the giant coral network has been made off-limits to commercial fishermen. Conservationists say authorities must also address threats posed by climate change and pollution. AFP

US forces bag secretary of Saddam deputy

KIRKUK, Iraq—American forces have captured the private secretary of Saddam Hussein's longtime deputy in a major operation aimed at netting the key fugitive himself as Washington's allies fret over troop deployments in Iraq.

And at least one US soldier was killed on Tuesday when two bomb attacks struck military convoys north of Baghdad near the site of deadly clashes on Sunday in which US troops said they killed 54 insurgents.

Saad Mohammed al-Duri was captured near Hawijah, 45 km west of Kirkuk, as rumors flew that his boss, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, had been arrested or even killed.

Hawijah police chief Awad al-Obeidi said the man was arrested in a house where he had been hiding.

Kirkuk's police chief, Gen. Turhan Yusef, said $40,000 was found in the man's possession, which was "suspected of being used to finance attacks on the US-led coalition."

Across north-central Iraq, more than 100 people were nabbed in what Yusef described as a "one-off operation aimed at finding Izzat Ibrahim based on specific intelligence."

Six Iraqis were wounded as several villages put up resistance to the massive cordon and search sweep.

An official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the dominant Kurdish faction in Kirkuk, said a former general in the disbanded Iraqi Army was also arrested in the raids, as was Hamid Saad, a senior official of Saddam's former ruling Baath party in charge of youth and student affairs.

Jalal Jawrar also said an arms cache and attack plans were found in the general's home. Other detainees included former member of the ultra-loyalist Saddam Fedayeen militia and middle-ranking Army officers.

Earlier, a senior police official in this northern city said US military had launched "the biggest search operation ever" in the area to hunt for Duri, the suspected paymaster of many attacks on the coalition. *AFP*

Bosnian Serb gets 27 years for massacre

THE HAGUE—The United Nations war crimes tribunal sentenced a Bosnian Serb officer to 27 years in prison Tuesday for taking part in the 1995 massacre of more than 7,500 Muslim civilians in Srebrenica.

Momir Nikolic was the first Bosnian Serb officer to admit his involvement in the Srebrenica massacre, when Serb forces overran the UN-declared "safe area" in eastern Bosnia, rounded up thousands of Muslim men and boys and killed them. The orgy of bloodletting was Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

In sentencing Nikolic for crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) went beyond the prosecutor's request for a prison term of 15 to 20 years and well beyond the defense's request for a sentence of no more than 10 years.

Judge Liu Daqun said neither term was sufficient.

"Neither sentence adequately reflects the totality of the criminal conduct for which Momir Nikolic has been convicted," Daqun said.

"He saw with his own eyes the separation of men from their families. He heard the cries of children as they saw their fathers taken away. He saw the fear in the eyes of the women pushed on to buses as they knew that the fate of their fathers, husbands and sons was beyond their control."

When the sentence was passed, Nikolic, slumped in his seat, put his head in his hands and began sobbing.

The 48-year-old Bosnian Serb had been a deputy commander for security and intelligence with the Bratunac brigade, which was operating in Srebrenica at the time of the massacre. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Russia won't ratify Kyoto Protocol

MOSCOW—In what would be a mortal blow to the accord aimed at halting global warming, a top Kremlin official said Russia would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol limiting greenhouse gas emissions because it would hurt the country's economy. The United States rejected the accord for the same reason. Without Moscow, the protocol cannot come into effect even if approved by every other nation because only Russia's industrial emissions are large enough to tip the balance. The pollution cuts required by the treaty would slow the economic growth that President Vladimir Putin has made a major priority, top adviser Andrei Illarionov said Tuesday. *AP*

Aceh rebels barred from celebrating

JAKARTA—Acehnese rebels who dare celebrate their movement's birthday will be shot unless they surrender, an Indonesian military spokesperson said Wednesday as troops killed six insurgents in fresh clashes. The Free Aceh Movement said it planned flag-raising ceremonies in the province on Thursday to mark the 27th anniversary of their first declaration of independence from Indonesia in 1976. The province, on the northern tip of Sumatra island, has been under martial law since the latest efforts to resolve the conflict collapsed in May and Jakarta launched an offensive to crush the rebellion. *AP*

Taiwan officer arrested for spying

TAIPEI—Taiwan has arrested an intelligence officer on charges of spying for rival China to raise money to pay off stock market debts, the military said. It was the third espionage case announced by the military in less than a month. The defense ministry identified the intelligence officer as Maj. Pai Chin-yang, 42, who grew up in Hong Kong and worked in the military's intelligence bureau for about two decades. Pai, arrested on Nov. 26, did not immediately comment. A military statement, issued late Tuesday, did not describe the secrets allegedly stolen by Pai for China. The military also didn't provide details about his work, saying only that he was involved in administrative affairs and didn't have a record of "outstanding performance." *AP*

Doctor convicted of sex abuse

PHOENIX—A jury that deliberated for 14 days convicted a Phoenix abortion doctor of 22 counts of sexual abuse of patients. Brian Finkel, 64, was acquitted of 34 other abuse charges, including six sexual assault counts. Jurors deadlocked on four counts, and Judge Jeffrey Cates dismissed six, citing a lack of evidence. The courtroom was silent when the verdict was read Tuesday, but victims applauded when Finkel was handcuffed and led out. He had been free on bond during the trial, which began in August. More than 30 women testified that Finkel groped them and inappropriately touched their breasts and genitals during exams. "Just because they're doctors, they're not God," said Janet Jorgensen, whose abuse allegations against Finkel were rejected by jurors. "They do things that are not OK." *AP*

Koizumi stresses int'l cooperation in fighting terror

By Isagani M. Yambot
Publisher

TOKYO—Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Tuesday night said that cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan was essential in fighting international terrorism.

In an interview with editors representing the Asia News Network, Koizumi also said the killing of two Japanese diplomats in Iraq would not stop Japan from continuing to send Self-Defense Forces personnel, government officials and civilians to help in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq.

"In Iraq and Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism is becoming a serious issue. In addressing this issue [Japan's] cooperation with Asean countries is essential," Koizumi said.

He said that the killing of two Japanese diplomats helping in the reconstruction of Iraq was "most regrettable." He added that he would send personnel and humanitarian aid after assessing the situation in Iraq very carefully.

"We should not allow Iraq to become a hotbed of terrorism," Koizumi said. "Japan should cooperate with the United States and the international community in helping Iraq achieve a stable democracy. We believe that's in Japan's interest."

"It's important that the government of Iraq discharge its responsibility so that Iraqis will be able to establish a stable government of their own," he added.

Koizumi said it was very likely that another round of the six-country talks to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons would be held soon.

Sex, alcohol off-limits to Miss World beauts

SANYA, China—It's all work and no play for the 106 beauty queens preparing for Miss World in China this week, with sex and alcohol strictly off-limits.

"They can meet with boyfriends and parents in the lobby in view of their chaperones, but there are no other activities," Paul Ridley, spokesperson for the Miss World organization, told AFP on Wednesday.

"We're looking after their moral standards, so to speak," added Ridley, who said alcohol was also prohibited.

"These are part of the Miss World rules and the image that it wants to present. They are seen as ambassadors for the organization and to their countries."

The girls battling for the title are at all times under the watchful eye of their chaperones, who also usher them to bed by the 11 p.m. curfew time so they get enough beauty sleep.

After Miss World has been crowned on Saturday, the regulations may be relaxed at the "coronation ball," a bash to celebrate the end of the contest.

"Then, probably there will be some celebrating of their success," Ridley said.

Hollywood kung fu film star Jackie Chan and Candace Bushnell, writer of the US comedy hit "Sex and the City," are among the nine judges selecting this year's Miss World in China.

Also co-hosting Miss World on Saturday in tropical Sanya city is British and US television star Amanda Byram.

"I needed the cash," Byram joked when asked by AFP why she had come to China. "Why not? It's Miss World," she said, adding that she used to watch the competition as a child. *AFP*

MISS World contestants—Switzerland's Bianco Nicole Sissing, Norway's Elisabeth Wathne, Ireland's Rosanna Davison and Bolivia's Helen Aponte Saucedo—show off their designer swimsuits in Sanya, Hainan, China, on Dec. 3. AP

China bares strategy to prevent arms proliferation

BEIJING—China revealed in unusual detail on Wednesday its methods of preventing dangerous weapons from falling into the wrong hands, trumpeting its trustworthiness even as it sideswiped the United States' approach by saying that "unilateralism and double standards must be abandoned."

The comments, in a 28-page "white paper" on nonproliferation, dovetailed with a major theme of the communist government's foreign policy in recent years—establishing China as a respectable, responsible country that will follow international rules.

Weapons of mass destruction, China said, benefit no one—particularly China itself.

"A developing China needs both an international and a peripheral environment of long-term peace and stability," the report said. "The proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery benefits neither world peace and stability nor China's own security."

It said it had made sure an array of procedures and penalties was in place to prevent companies from transferring technology or materials that could be made into chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. "No license, no exports," the report said.

A copy of the document was released early to several news organizations, including The Associated Press. The government was to release it publicly later Wednesday.

Particularly noteworthy was China's breakdown of government agencies responsible for monitoring technology exports that could be used as weapons. The detailed, agency-by-agency citations create a higher possibility of accountability in a government notorious for years for its administrative opacity.

The report made no specific mention of North Korea, China's neighbor and communist ally, which is embroiled in a dispute with the United States over its nuclear program. China has acted as a mediator of sorts in hosting a six-nation meeting to resolve the disagreement, and another could convene later this month.

But, in a clear swipe at the US approach in Iraq, China said many nations must work together through established channels to make sure that prevention of proliferation was "democratic."

"Unilateralism and double standards must be abandoned, and great importance should be attached and full play given to the role of the United Nations," it said.

China vocally opposed the US invasion of Iraq in March and said any punishment of a sovereign nation's leader should go through the UN Security Council, where China is a permanent member and wields veto power. The United States cited Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction as justification for its military action.

The white paper could also be designed to assure the international community, particularly the United States, that China is not exporting missile or other weapons technology and has the apparatus in place to prevent such transfers.

AP

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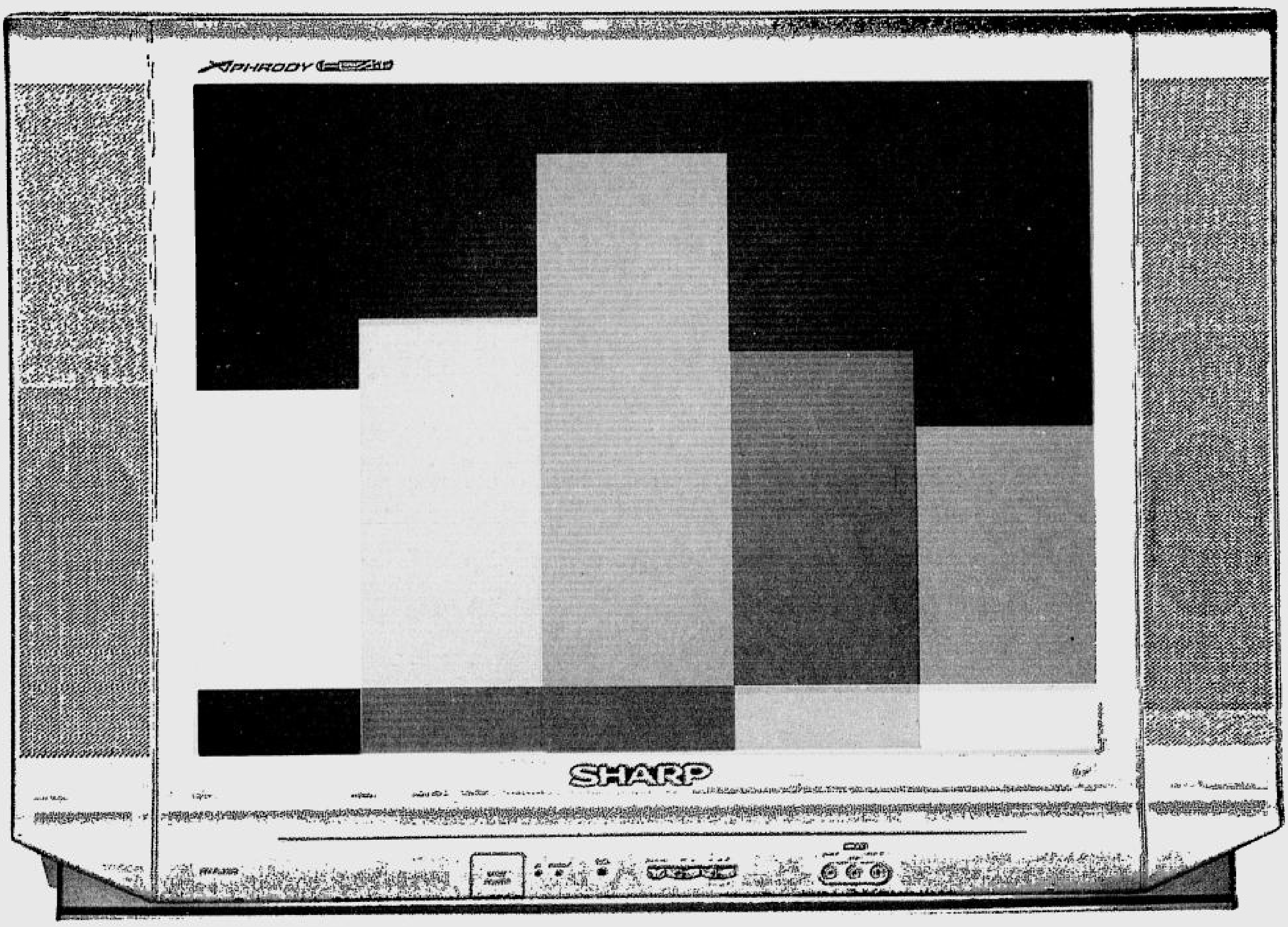

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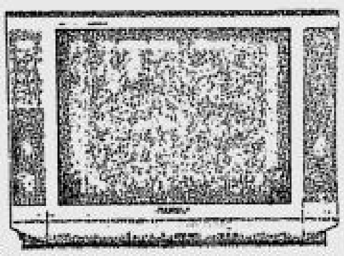

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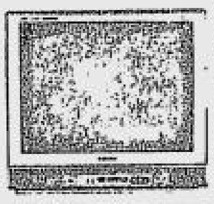

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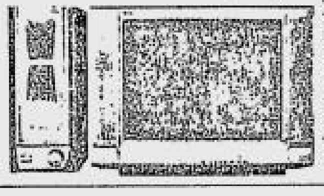

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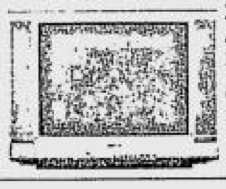
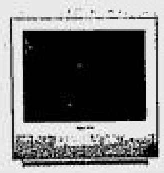


20V-L230S
480 mm (20")
Primo MTS Stereo
Other 20-inch Primo models:
20V-L110M
Primo Dual Speakers
20V-L75M Primo



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OPINION

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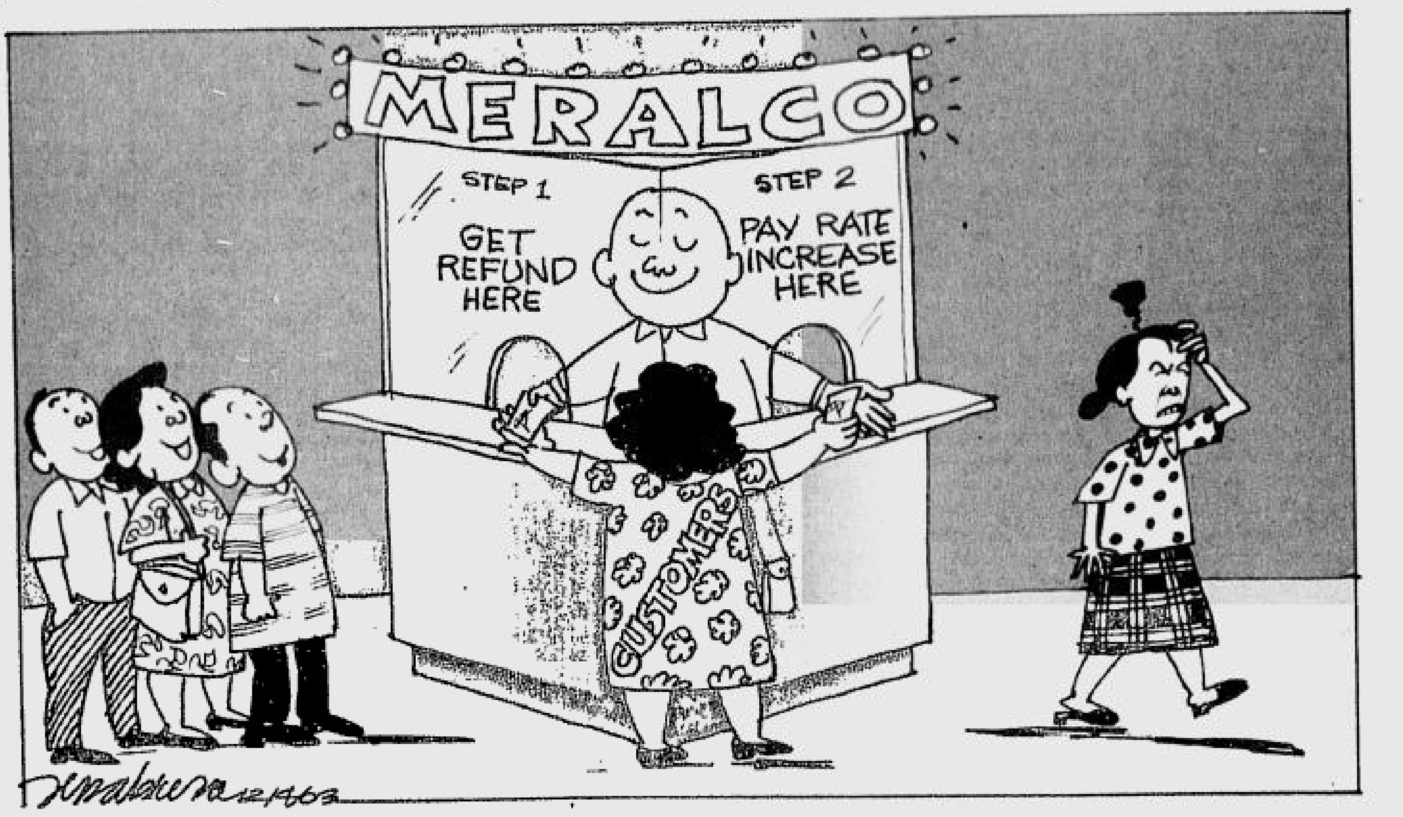

Focus on issues

EDITORIAL

IN A PERVERSE way, the presidential bid of Fernando Poe Jr. in the 2004 presidential elections, has forced three of his opponents to move on to issues to differentiate themselves from his vacuous position on questions that concern most Filipinos.

If the discussion on the elections has taken more substance, it's no thanks to Poe who most likely does not envisage himself in the role of catalyst of public debate. As Poe continued to dodge occasions in which his views on public issues may be scrutinized, three presidential contenders—President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Education Secretary Raul Roco and Sen. Panfilo Lacson—waded into forums to define themselves.

One forum that crystallized the issues was the Philippine Business Conference held over the weekend, to which Poe was invited but which he avoided like the plague. This avoidance itself revealed more of Poe than the platitudes read by his surrogate, Sen. Vicente Sotto III. No one understood, except probably Poe and Sotto, what his message meant.

At the businessmen's conference, two issues crystallized as major concerns: law and order, and corruption. These concerns highlighted the issues over which the electoral battle will be fought—and won or lost.

The President was put on the defensive by the law and order problem, which acquired prominence in the wake of several kidnapping cases, including that of Coca-Cola financial executive Betti Chua Sy. The President devoted much of her speech to explain the measures her administration had taken to stem the wave of abductions, among them the crackdown on kidnap-for-ransom syndicates by the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force, headed by former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, and the revival of the proposal to institute a national identification system.

The law and order theme played into the hands of Lacson who pictured himself as taking a harder line than the administration. He pledged, if elected president, that he would eliminate organized crime and restore "justice, law and order" within the first 180 days of his presidency.

This speech was obviously addressed at the businessmen, many of whom were members of the Chinese-Filipino community which has been the favorite target of kidnapping syndicates. And the businessmen predictably reserved their biggest applause to this theme. In fact, at the end of the conference, the businessmen came up with a manifesto that put law and order at the top of their concerns. This is one problem that the administration, which is perceived to be weak-kneed in the area of law enforcement, can ignore at its own risk.

The business community, which is nervous over the crime wave and the political uncertainty fanned by election tensions, is a constituency that can be sympathetic to strong arm methods to restore law and order as an environment for a stable business environment. The Employers Confederation of the Philippines, reflected the general sentiment at the conference, when its president said that the elections would be won or lost on the basis of how voters perceive the candidates' plan to restore law and order and eradicate corruption.

Sensing the mood, Roco did not allow Lacson to have a monopoly of the corruption issue. While he demanded the replacement of the administration, he promised an honest and competent government, and made a swipe at Poe by saying, "Let's not replace (the Macapagal administration) with one that's not competent." However Roco avoided being tagged as a single-issue candidate like Lacson. He put a new spin to his campaign theme by offering hope and calling for strong law enforcement and free education on the primary and secondary levels. His call for the eradication of corruption also drew loud applause from the businessmen.

The highlighting of law and order and corruption as primary concerns relegated to the back seat the economic issues, which are the strong suit of the Macapagal administration. The first two concerns were emphasized even though figures released by the government showed a higher growth of the gross national product for the year. Concerns over political uncertainties and crime negated the impact of optimistic growth forecasts.

A short interview with Erap

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WE were given permission to interview, briefly, detained former President Joseph Estrada, so we motored to Tanay, Rizal, along the newly concreted Marcos Highway which connects Metro Manila to Infanta, Quezon. Before I go to the interview itself, let me describe the breathtaking scenery along the way.

The winding Marcos Highway was carved out of the mountainsides. It goes up and over the Sierra Madre Mountain range that divides Luzon into the undeveloped eastern side often hit by typhoons, and the developed and congested western side that includes Metro Manila. In Marikina and Antipolo, there is heavy traffic. Farther on, the traffic eases but squatters take over both sides of the road. Then comes the beautiful part, beginning with the scenic and historic Boso-boso valley, otherwise known as the Marikina Watershed Reservation.

From the highway, the valley is a beautiful and bucolic sight and does not betray at all the ugly things going on in it: the squatters, landgrabbers, land speculators, charcoal makers and assorted other opportunists cutting down the trees, claiming the land for themselves and ravaging nature. The peaceful scenery does not betray the violence that went on there where a number of farmers have been killed by the hirelings of wealthy landgrabbers. The valley is a mere one-hour drive from the main office in Quezon City of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which administers and protects(?) the area.

The road winds down from the top of a ridge to the valley floor. On one side are the tall cliffs from which the road has been carved; on the other are the small farms and the wide meadows. Farther on are low hills covered with grass, looking like giant green beetles. On a flat plain in Baras is Lucio Tan's Foremost Farms, the biggest piggery in Southeast Asia.

Farther on, hardly visible from the road, is the pine forest planted by the Manila Seedling Bank Foundation. The stately pines hide the ugly gashes made by charcoal makers who cut the trees and make them into charcoal. They also hide the land grabbed by a family of ethnic Chinese who, with the connivance of a DENR official, had been able to have a big tract of land titled in the names of members of the family. This anomaly has been reported to the DENR a number of times, but the DENR has done nothing.

After this depressing part comes the beautiful countryside: rolling hillsides on both sides still green with grass and *cogon*. Wild sunflowers grow in profusion on the roadside and wave their yellow flowers at us. When the *cogon* and *talahib* bloom, I am sure the sight would be even more beautiful with the white fluffy flowers waving rhythmically in the wind.

Both sides of Marcos Highway, one kilometer deep, have been declared as animal sanctuaries, so I don't understand why parts of it have been fenced and mansions have been built on the choicest spots with the best scenery.

The road zigs and zags gently, two-lane concrete all the way except for a short stretch paved with gravel. "That's where the kickback was to have been used," says one of the journalists.

All too suddenly, we are at Camp Capinpin, the journey's end. I am sure more stunning scenery awaits the traveler all the way to Infanta.

* * *

At journey's end was a tanned former President Estrada in a jacket and low-waist pants, waddling like a duck because of his arthritic knees. When is he leaving to have his knees operated in America? he was asked.

"I don't want to leave anymore," he replied. "*Baka hindi na ako pabalikin.*"

"Why did you say that?"

"Because the administration is too eager to see me go. They don't want me here during the elections."

"What about your knees?"

"I may just ask the US doctor to come here and operate on me."

"How much would it cost?"

"One million dollars! That includes four assistants, the equipment they will bring here, medicine, airline costs, hotel."

"How much would it cost if you go there?"

"Only $250,000."

The talk went to the coming polls and the intramurals in the opposition. The two candidates for standard-bearer of the United Opposition are both his close friends. Ping Lacson is his former police chief and crime fighter. Fernando Poe Jr. is his bosom friend, *kumpare* who gave him the name Erap, colleague and co-star. Whom is he supporting?

"FPJ!" Erap replied without hesitation. "I already told Ping a year ago: How can I not support FPJ? He helped me in all my campaigns as mayor, senator, vice president, and president. When I was campaigning for the presidency, he did not make any movie so he could campaign for me. He was always by my side. I was the only candidate he shared the stage with. He did not speak on the stage for any other candidate. How can I not support him?"

"People say FPJ is running so he can pardon you."

"Pardon? I don't want to be pardoned! I am not guilty. Only the guilty ones are pardoned."

"Did FPJ consult you before he made the decision to run?"

"No. He is his own man. The last time I talked to him was four months ago."

"Do you think he will win?"

"Is there still any doubt? He is the strongest candidate. *Lalampasuhin silang lahat ni FPJ. Sa kangkungan silang lahat pupulutin.*"

"But what if he is not chosen opposition standard-bearer?"

"*Gago sila*, if they don't! Sure winner *na ito, iba pa ang pipiliin?* The happiest person will be GMA. They are so scared, terrified, of FPJ."

Trapped

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

EVERY day for the last couple of weeks, a neighbor of mine plays Christmas songs. I live on the third floor of a building in a housing project, and the buildings being packed in closely, unless you set up your speakers strategically to avoid aiming them at the windows, you are going to regale the world with your sounds. And apprise your neighbors of your musical taste, but that is another story. The speakers on this one seem to have been deliberately aimed at the world.

And specifically, since he lives right across me, to my living room. My neighbor seems to have sufficient confidence in his musical taste to wish to share it with others. In this case, he seems to have been filled with a Christmas longing sufficiently early—or probably just in time (I heard another neighbor play Christmas songs last October, quite resolutely but only for a day—to demand to share it with others. When I say every day for the last couple of weeks, I mean every day for the last couple of weeks. I do not mean morning, noon or night, I mean morning, noon and night. Or, since I can already hear some people saying there I go again with my exaggerations, the most part of morning, noon and night.

The songs mostly come from Ray Conniff's Christmas album, "We Wish You A Merry Christmas." I know that because I used to own a vinyl of it. Someone bequeathed it to us a long time ago, and I've treasured it for many reasons, not the least of them being that I got it in impoverished times, and buying LPs, as they were called then, cost a pretty penny. You took pride in your collection packed tightly somewhere, the frayed edges of the album covers revealing the most frequently played ones.

But I treasured that Ray Conniff album as well because I liked it. Never mind that it bid the skies let fall its snow, stranger wishes have emanated from the heart or pit of this country. There was real magic in it—well, still is—the side B in particular, vinyl, for the benefit of the generation that cannot understand how so primitive a thing could have been invented, containing material on both sides. To this day, vinyl has a much superior sound to CD, but that's still another story. The side B, to go back, is pure joy, the part particularly where a medley of carols ends in a crescendo of "We wish you a merry Christmas."

That is the thing that issues every day from the bowels of my neighbor's lair. And it sounds as though it's on a loop because it keeps repeating and repeating until all the songs keep playing again and again in my brain, like a broken record, to use a metaphor from vinyl days. I normally do not have any problem with that. But the sounds, which are loud enough to wake up Scrooge, are trained directly at the very spot where I write, and are unrelenting. This has led me to wonder if my neighbor might not be a relative of the occupant of Malacañang. I am one of those who prefer quiet when they write. I am able to focus better and write faster that way. Christmas thoughts do not fill my head when "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow" is rapping insistently on it like an emergency. Not even Christian thoughts.

I tried escaping a couple of times to my boy's room, which is at the far end of our unit. But another neighbor on that part of earth was also playing Christmas songs. The one I heard repeatedly was "Pasko Na Sinta Ko," cascading like a copious waterfall (my neighbor lives upstairs) into my boy's room. And from a karaoke, which I know from the fact that minus-one singing has issued forth from the same source at odd hours of the day on various occasions.

What can I say? I am trapped by Christmas!

"Silent Night" is now blaring from the speakers of my neighbor, the one who may or may not be a relative of the occupant of Malacañang. And while my ceiling fan furiously roisters a warm humid air amid the strains of cold and chill, I am suddenly seized by an inspired thought: There is a way I can get back at this intrusion, there is a way I can benefit from this assault. I can write about it and make some money out of it!

But that thought is short-lived. I realize too suddenly that Christmas has burst into my life again unannounced, or announced through a loudspeaker, not very so-to-speak. The season itself has always begun for me with my daughter's birthday, which is Dec. 2, and that I almost forgot too! My life has been one of meeting deadlines for the last decade and a half. It has its rewards, but it has also had the effect of making time shrink. A year has a way of slipping by almost unnoticed. And fast: Wasn't it Christmas just the other day?

So maybe the intrusion isn't so unwelcome after all. Maybe it is a wake-up call in more ways than one. I have been writing columns for as long as I can remember—it feels that way now—and with a regularity that has become law. I haven't missed one other than in the most unusual circumstances. I remember that my daughter was tremendously worried many years ago when my column did not come out for a couple of days. I was abroad and had problems sending the stuff over. She was convinced I was bedridden. Only that, she thought, could have prevented me from writing.

And so while my neighbor sends his Christmas felicitations to me by way of Ray Conniff, while the roads leading in and out of our housing project teem with *bibingka* and *puto-bumbong* and other *kakanin* (as true a precursor of Simbang Gabi as John the Baptist was of Jesus Christ) and while offices grind to a halt and my cell phone groans with text messages demanding I reserve every day of the next few weeks for Christmas parties, I am here pounding on the keys of my computer while an overhead fan rustles up a storm.

What can I say? I am trapped by column-writing!

Pushing 50 high-profile criminal cases

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

WITH THE MEDIA spotlight on criminality, especially kidnapping for ransom (KFR), citizens are exhibiting growing concern and there's tremendous pressure on the administration to do something about it. In turn, state police authorities, led by anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes, are under orders to crack down on some 10 or so known kidnap gangs. But a small news item at the bottom of yesterday's story about kidnappers in the INQUIRER could be very much a part of the current problem of criminality.

After the recent meeting of the National Council on the Administration of Justice at the Department of Justice attended by top officials involved in curbing criminality, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said that he would move for daily court hearings on 50 high-profile criminal cases before the courts. The President has ordered a speedy resolution of these cases. I was surprised to read that one of those cases pending before the Quezon City regional trial court involves that of the former mayor of Panulukan, Quezon, Ronnie Mitra, who was caught trying to transport about P1 billion worth of shabu to Metro Manila two years ago, the government's biggest drug haul at the time.

* * *

It is said that one of the reasons criminals show little fear of the law is the snail's pace of prosecution and trial as well as the fact that some government prosecutors and court officials can be bribed. The justice department, which has jurisdiction over the prosecutors, and the judiciary have to address these problems. For instance, Zuño is calling for daily hearings which is an excellent idea. But there are doubts if this could be done since courts remain unoccupied, with the result that sitting judges get overloaded with cases.

* * *

The Wallace Business Forum, run by Australian business executive Peter Wallace, a longtime Manila resident, recently briefed media on the results of its annual survey of members, mostly multinational companies (MNCs) operating here, on their contributions to the local economy, the problems they face, and their perception of the Philippines as an investment location. The 2003 Corporate Survey conducted from July to August drew responses from 42 companies, representing a wide range of industries, with 27 of them classified among the country's top 5,000 corporations. The picture that emerged from the survey was predictably checkered: there was bad news but some good news too, and oftentimes the two were intertwined.

* * *

First the bad news. According to the survey, 29 firms reported a 3.8 percent decline in employment in 2003, while salaries and wages grew 6.7 percent, indicating that firms were hiring higher-skilled, technical and managerial workers and letting go of many unskilled laborers. This means that competition is tougher than ever and woe to those without skills. The sales of 27 companies in 2002 fell by 1.1 percent and profits slipped by 4.7 percent. All the respondents continued to struggle in the first semester of this year, with 13 firms reporting as much as a 60.6 percent drop in profits. Among the business executives polled, 55 percent thought that doing business today was the same as a year ago, an improvement over 2002's 45 percent, while those who thought it was "worse to much worse" shrank from 35 percent last year to 32 percent. Only 36 percent of the companies said they're expanding over the next three years, and WBF said this was the poorest response since the survey started 17 years ago.

* * *

Among the good news: Despite adverse conditions, none of those doing business here said it is pulling out. In fact, 41 percent of the companies said their head offices were supportive of their operations, an improvement over last year's 26 percent, though "not as encouraging" as the responses before 2000, when support ranged from 63 to 93 percent. It is possible that the 20 points or so improvement this year could have factored in the 4 percent growth of the economy this year, and put negative factors, such as the conflict in the South and the peace and order problems in the metropolis, in proper perspective.

Moreover, the percentage of those who perceived RP to be "worse or the worst" investment site in Asia was down from 62 percent to 55 percent this year. RP also improved to No. 6 from No. 8 as the country "where the head offices would want to invest." By contrast, Malaysia fell as the preferred investment site from No. 3 last year to No. 7 this year (Wallace surmises this could be due to the uncertainties over the transfer of power from Prime Minister Mahathir to Badawi) and Vietnam from No. 7 to No. 8, while Indonesia improved from No. 11 to No. 9. Topping the list of investors' preference was, not surprisingly, China, leaving the other Asian countries "just content with fighting for the leftovers."

* * *

The WBF survey said that the tough business climate this year as well as the tendency of MNCs to gravitate toward China indicated that the Philippines has to address the most critical operating issues. In the eyes of the executives, these include the guarantee of policy stability, consistency and transparency; addressing peace and order and security problems; fighting graft and corruption more decisively; and improving political stability and infrastructure. Topping the list of problems is the volatility of the exchange rate. While the executives acknowledged that "wild peso swings" resulted from "global uncertainties," e.g., the Iraq war, SARS, etc., and the "political noise" (the Oakwood mutiny, the Lacson exposé, the suspension by court order of Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura, etc.), they stressed that major currency fluctuations make it difficult to make sound corporate decisions.

Gender Justice Awards

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

LAWYERS who handle cases of violence against women tell me that they are often astounded that some judges aren't even aware that a law against sexual harassment has been passed. A few don't even know that rape has been re-classified from a "crime against chastity" to a "crime against a person." And many judges, here and in other parts of the world, still believe that what a woman was wearing at the time of the assault, whether she was out on the streets at night unaccompanied by a man, whether she had previous sexual experience or not, are all relevant issues in a rape case.

Indeed, crucial to raising the level of public understanding of the issue of violence against women as well as enshrining the principle of the equality of men and women before the law is the awareness of our judges and justices and other officers of the court of gender issues and how these can best be reflected in the application of our laws.

For this reason, the United Nations Fund for Women (Unifem) Asia-Pacific Regional Office, together with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), are sponsoring the "Gender Justice Awards," a search and recognition of outstanding judges who have shown gender sensitivity and awareness, as well as courage and conviction, in their decisions on cases involving violence against women over the last 15 years.

"Many women who suffer violence often do not file cases against their abusers," a primer on the awards states. Their reasons for refusing to file are mainly due to their lack of resources for litigation, a support system and "the perceived unreliability of the justice system."

"Poor women are intimidated by the court process," the primer continues, "which is lengthy and expensive."

* * *

IN ADDITION, the primer points out that "many judges and prosecutors continue to perpetuate in their decisions the misconceptions and biases against women who are victims of violence. Cases are lost because of the inability of judges and prosecutors to understand the situation of women, the unequal relations of power between men and women in families and in our society, and their continuing acceptance of misconceptions about rape and other forms of violence against women."

What the Gender Justice Awards hope to accomplish is to "raise the level of awareness of judges on the need for rendering gender sensitive decisions in VAW cases." The Awards will recognize five trial judges from all over the country who rendered "good" decisions in VAW cases (rape, marital rape, sexual harassment, battering, legal separation or nullity of marriage, including psychological and emotional abuse within a relationship).

In time, organizers of the search and awards hope these will: raise the quality of court decisions on VAW cases, inform the judges of the state obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw), inspire trial judges to be gender sensitive, and raise the level of expectations of the public from our judges.

* * *

ASIDE FROM UNIFEM and the NCRFW, the awards are also being organized by the University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies Foundation, with Rowena V. Guanzon, a lawyer who is most famous as the "feisty" former mayor of Cadiz City in Negros Occidental, as project co-leader and consultant. Partners are the Committee on Gender and Judicial Reform of the Supreme Court, the Legal Advocates for Women Network, Asian Center for Women's Human Rights, Zonta Club of Metro Pasig and other women's organizations, the Philippine Bar Association, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and Bantay Katarungan, among others.

After a selection process for finalists, a board of judges composed of three to five distinguished men and women in the legal profession and Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism will choose the outstanding judges.

The project will be launched on Dec. 8, on the same occasion as the presentation of the Cedaw report by the NCRFW. As part of the launching, the project will sponsor a forum on "Men Speak Out Against VAW," where men in government will be asked to speak on the need for men to get involved in the struggle against all forms of violence against women. Among those who will be invited are Chief Justice Hilario Davide and Senate President Frank Drilon.

* * *

THE GENDER Justice Awards will be given out in March next year, and excerpts of the winning decisions will be published in the journal of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) after the awarding ceremony. Before the awarding ceremony, the list of winners will be published in the IBP Newsletter.

Who qualifies to be nominated for the Gender Justice Awards? Nominees need to be incumbent or retired judges of the regional trial courts, municipal trial courts, and metropolitan trial courts who have not "rendered a decision that clearly violates the rights of women," and must not have a pending or prior administrative case involving violence against women.

Criteria for judging the quality of the decision include: gender sensitivity and "a keen understanding of VAW"; it addresses the issue of discrimination against women as defined in Cedaw; it was rendered during the last five years; and the judge "must not have shown insensitivity to women litigants in the conduct of trial in any of the cases in his or her court."

If you know of any judge who meets these standards, send a nomination form to: The Project Committee, Gender Justice Awards, UP Center for Women's Studies Foundation, Inc., Magsaysay cor. Ylanan Ave., Diliman, Quezon City, or call 920-6880 or 920-6950 for details.

Whispering HOPE

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HANDA, tapat, totoo. Prepared, sincere, genuine—the basic qualities a would-be president of the republic should have, presidential aspirant Raul Roco (now in the coalition Alyansa ng Pag-asa) said last Saturday at the 29th Philippine Business Conference held at the Manila Hotel.

I was sent there to cover Roco's presentation. Panfilo Lacson was someone else's assignment. Movie action king Fernando Poe Jr. had the flu and a cold *daw*, not cold feet.

The next day, my report came out rather abbreviated, as there were other matters that had to be given more space. So here are the other bits I picked up that might be of interest. Remember the things this guy is saying and, if he wins, see if he will walk his talk.

Raising his hand with two middle fingers folded down to signify the letter H, Roco presented his "Agenda of HOPE" to captains of business and industry. Roco's H could well stand for *handa* (prepared) which Roco stressed he was. I don't doubt that.

HOPE stands for honest government, opportunity for all and special privileges for none, peace, productivity and prosperity and education and environment for sustainable development. It also includes health, the economy, local governance, the rule of law, foreign affairs and values.

The Filipino is good, Roco kept stressing, citing remarkable Filipinos, among them, teacher par excellence Dr. Josette Biyo who now has a planet named after her. There is something about the Filipinos' DNA, he said.

Roco is a great speaker, using just the right decibel and the right inflection and cadence in his words. This guy surely knows poetry. And he also always puts a human face on his data. If Lacson came to lecture and impress with his Powerpoint presentation, Roco hardly glanced at notes, he delivered flawlessly, he spoke not just to inform but to inspire.

Well, if your agenda is hope, you better not be boring. Copies of Roco's "Agenda" were distributed to the audience for later reading.

Roco did not indulge in the common litany of negatives and instead spoke about what could be done even while citing problems that prevented the country from moving forward, such as graft and corruption.

Calling businessmen "stewards," Roco urged his audience to participate in poverty alleviation and economic growth. He cited microfinance as one means to help the poor. "We will never eradicate poverty if we do not share," he said.

The role of the government, Roco said, is to empower and remove obstacles in order for business to thrive. Citing the fall of Enron, he said corporate governance must also be transparent and business must make "profit with honor." I liked him saying that to businessmen.

Among Roco's economic promises:

- Increase the tax effort ratio to 20 percent of gross domestic product by broadening the tax base and ensuring an equitable distribution of the tax burden.
- Provide access to credit and capital formation for self-employment.
- Generate enterprise by following the principle of geographic clustering.
- Upgrade capacity of local governments to provide agriculture support services.
- Upgrade farmer access to technology, venture capital and liberalized credit.
- Major improvements in infrastructure, inter-island transport, water and sanitation and power.
- Organize a Presidential Commission for the Management of Global Migration to ensure sustainable benefits, growth and development from the outward and inward movement of Filipinos.
- Start operating Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Roco stressed the importance of fair trade and the protection of Filipino farmers, for them to adapt technology so that they could be competitive. He also pointed to the local governments as "the fulcrum of growth."

He has read the development plans of the past 25 years, Roco said, and they are all basically the same. What then is the solution? Leaders must be able to implement, he said.

Education should "bring out the power and talent of the poor." Recalling how he fought corruption in the education department and lowered the price of textbooks, Roco promised to "ensure the survival rate" of students by enforcing the law that guarantees free education at the primary and high school level.

Said he: "The thesis I am submitting is this: the record of Roco says it can be done. Help me and we can do it even better."

In the fight against lawlessness, Roco emphasized that the rule of law must prevail. (Was the Kuratong Baleleng case that hounds Lacson on his mind?) "Peace and order must come from the community," he added.

"Agenda of HOPE" also lists Roco's perspective on foreign affairs, among them, "providing more active support to the collective multilateral approach to the solution of international conflict through the UN in order to make the world a safer place"; the strengthening of ties with current allies, including the US, Japan, China and South Korea as well as the European Union, and "revitalization of participation in BIMP/EAGA (East Asia Growth Area) to benefit the people.

Roco spoke of the power and "the light within" the Filipino. It is not a strong republic that is needed, he said, but a strong people. "Strong republic" is a favorite catchphrase of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"People are our wealth, they are more important than institutions," Roco said. The Filipino has what it takes, he said, but he needs a leader.

"The problem is the credibility of our leaders. We should have a leader who is respected. Yes, *tapat at totoo*, but *handa naman*."

As an honest president—that's how Roco would want to be remembered. Let's see.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Wonderful

YOUNG BLOOD

Tish Martinez

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I KEEP a box that I have labeled "I'm-over-this-and-I've-moved-on-box." In it I put my ex-boyfriends, together with my first failing grades (which sadly are not my last ones) and my first disappointments. And I fill it with thoughts of what could have been.

This box has a certain charm, but I can never get myself to open it until I'm ready. One day I was standing over it like some creature bent on mass destruction. I had a broom in one hand and a plastic bag on the other. I was ready to clean it out, throw away the memories and forget the past.

Into the plastic bag went the Math test papers from high school. But they seemed to have taken a life of their own, flying away from my hands as if to tell me not to throw them away. I caught them though. And as I crumpled them, I thought of every mistake I had made and why I couldn't learn my lessons.

I still couldn't tell x from y, and the square root from the cube root. I still couldn't recite the multiples of seven. But I thought, "Hey, at least I can now count from one to twenty-five with little difficulty." From time to time, I felt bad about those tests. I thought I was a total dork, unable to compute the values of those variables.

As I stood there, I knew I still couldn't manipulate variables. But I consoled myself with the thought that at least I learned other values, the things that can be applied to life.

As I stared at the Math papers, feelings of nostalgia swept over me. I wouldn't have had half my worth if not for some people who walked into my life. These people seemed worthless when I first met them, and I thought I would be better off without them. They seemed more of a hassle than a blessing.

One of them was my Math teacher, Ms Rodriguez. Everyone in my class had a different opinion about her. Some said she was crazy. They laughed at the way she lectured while facing the board. She told us about the latest happenings in telenovelas as she taught us about the mean and median of a line. She would reprimand us for not sitting with our "*ka*-love team" after pairing us girls with the boys.

I didn't know what to think of her. Even if she did look and act a little crazy, I admired the way she put up with our class which was so noisy. She looked funny as she walked to our classroom with her thin frame, carrying a big bag. She would wear a sweatshirt when the weather permitted. Most of the time she wore a scarf that was either engine red, bright blue or Christmas green. She walked as if she were half swaying and half trying to keep her balance, while seemingly singing a song no one could hear.

I dreaded the sight of her crossing the soccer field on the way to our classroom. I was never ready for her classes. I seldom did my homework and I never prepared for the tests. Every day as 10 o'clock approached, I silently prayed that she would not come. Now and then, she would be absent and everyone would rejoice. Then I would rush to the canteen or just sleep until our next class.

One day she stormed into our classroom holding our test papers. Before I knew it, she was flinging the yellow sheets at us. I just stared at her as she fumed. I was wondering why she was so mad. When she was done throwing away our test papers and pacing around the classroom, she went out. I looked at my classmates who were clutching their test papers and their faces told me what it was all about.

I found mine on the floor near my chair. I had scored 14 out of 50. I was grateful that some of my answers were correct. I felt no remorse over my failing mark. I only felt a little thirsty since the day was unusually hot.

Still holding my test paper, I stepped out of the classroom and saw Ms Rodriguez looking at the plants. "She really must be crazy," I said to myself. I asked her, "Ma'am, *may* lesson *pa ba tayo?*"

She looked up and said, "*Ikaw, bata ka, mag-aral ka naman para matuwa si* mommy *at* daddy. *Hindi 'yung* canteen *ka nang* canteen."

I felt insulted. Yes, I spent half of my time in school outside the classroom. But no, I didn't constantly go to the canteen. I sensed that I was turning red over her remark. I wanted to tell her that she was as much of a frustration as a teacher as I was as a student. I wanted to say she was a joke. I wanted to hurt her too. I wanted to ridicule her fashion sense, her idiotic perm or her teaching style. I wanted to let her know that I was a person, too, who felt offended by her unkind remarks.

I was still trying to figure out the things I would say when she started talking again. I thought she was talking to me but I saw that she was looking at the plants. She was telling them that it was a shame to waste a good mind doing mindless things. She told them that they should enjoy learning while they were young since they would be young only once. Then she turned to me and said, "*Oy ikaw,* Tisha, *sa susunod gamitin ang* notebook *sa pagkopya nang hindi lagpak sa* exam. *Ikaw rin, baka may* prize *ka kay* mommy *pag pumasa ka. Baka taasan ang* allowance *mo.*"

I couldn't help but smile. She was sane after all. I guess she just wanted her students to learn their lessons.

Looking back now, I wonder what would have happened if I had spoken up. Would her advice have been different? Or would she have just let it pass?

I must have been her favorite delinquent. Even after the reprimand, I didn't try any harder. I kept procrastinating. But surprisingly by the end of the year, I had learned enough to pass the subject.

Back then I thought Ms Rodriguez was an old fraud. I kept my thoughts to myself though. My sophomore year was done and I was free of the lunatic. Or so I thought.

I met her again at the end the first term of my junior year. She looked as wacky as ever. She was walking straight toward at me. I looked at her curiously and greeted her quietly. "Hi, ma'am."

"*Hay nako,* Tisha," she said. "*Sabi sa akin ng titser mo bumabagsak ka na naman sa* Math. *Tama na ang pagbo*-boyfriend, *mag-aral ka naman.*"

She smiled and I had to smile back. "Ma'am *naman, bakit niyo ba ako lagi pinagdidisketahan?*" I asked.

She was still smiling when she said; "*Kasi kahit ganyan ka, alam ko may* future *ka rin.*"

It has been some time since we last saw each other, and now I wish I could sit down and talk to her. I want to tell her how I struggled through the rest of my high school life and how difficult college can be. And I want to thank her for her advice.

I wish I could tell my former classmates that Ms Rodriguez wasn't mad; she was just different, very different.

Although my high school Math was very embarrassing, I believe it was worth the humiliation. I met a great person.

It was a crime to think of her as a fraud. It would be heinous if I forgot how much she loved her job and her students. It would be unforgivable if I forgot how much she had encouraged me. And it would be an outrage if I did not acknowledge that she was a wonderful teacher.

Thank you Ms Rodriguez for inspiring me to use my Math notebook and my head. Thank you for teaching me the value of seeing beyond words and letting me witness what teaching with passion meant.

Tish Martinez, 17, is a freshman at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Pinoy kidnappings, national hijacking

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

LAST Monday, in broad daylight, 61-year-old Anthony Uy was murdered in front of a bank on Libertad Street, Mandaluyong. He had just withdrawn money and had gotten into his car when armed men approached his vehicle in an apparent robbery attempt. Uy resisted and was gunned down.

For months now, fear and anxiety have been on a slow simmer in the Chinoy community. Even before this latest rash of kidnappings and murders, there were 157 kidnapping victims reported between January and September 2003. Heaven knows how many more abductions occurred and were hushed up.

Last month the Chinoy community declared that it had had enough, after the kidnapping-murder of Betti Chua Sy. Chinoys converted her funeral into a protest march. The President came out trying to look tough, but the kidnappings have continued.

I started out with the Uy case because his murder, while making it into all the front pages of local Chinese papers on Tuesday, was not picked up by any of the major English dailies, at least not on the front page. Uy was well known in the Chinoy community, as a tenor singer and someone active in civic organizations.

The Chinoy community is reeling from all these assaults but I feel that while the larger Pinoy community is reacting with some sympathy, this is often accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders: "Oh, it's only a few Chinoys being victimized. We're not Chinoy, so why worry?"

I worry that we see this crime wave as a problem limited to the Chinoy community when, in fact, what we're seeing is a very sick body politic taking a turn for the worse. Whatever's happening now to the Chinoy community threatens to hijack the entire nation's future.

Yesterday's newspapers focused on the 10 most wanted kidnappers, painting a picture of large crime syndicates behind this latest wave. Many Chinoys are worried that the latest kidnappings suggest that it's actually amateur gangs at work here. There are several reasons to suspect this. First is the choice of targets: a 10-year-old school girl last week, then a 2-year-old boy this week. Second is the way some of these operations are bungled up: Sy was shot by her kidnappers and left to bleed to death.

The descriptions of the kidnappings, and the murder of Uy, suggest clumsy operations by amateurs unsure about what they're doing but all too ready to spill blood. During the kidnapping of the 10-year-old girl last week, the girl's driver and nanny were critically wounded. The driver has since died while the girl remains with her abductors.

The fear many Chinoys have is that the emergence of these amateur gangs shows a total breakdown of law and order. The criminals—veterans or amateurs—are now so totally emboldened. It almost seems that every time the President or a government official comes out trying to look tough, the criminals strike back in defiance by launching more heists.

People wonder about GMA's leadership, fed up with the alphabet soup of task forces and commissions and committees, all seen as political gimmickry. Erap's PACC (Presidential Anti-Crime Commission) gave way to GMA's Pacer (Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response) and Naktaf (National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force). The latter was first headed by Nani Perez, turned moribund after his exit from the political scene and was then awarded to Angelo Perez as *consuelo de bobo* after he resigned as defense secretary.

Now how does one translate *consuelo de bobo*? A fool's consolation? But who's the fool here? The Chinoy community complains that a military man shouldn't be directing police matters. It's not just a matter of competence but also of turfing, so crucial in the Philippines. One community leader who asked not to be identified observed that Reyes came in with his own ideas and with his own men, demoralizing the police force: "Reyes comes into the anti-kidnapping scene like a stepfather, with his own brood of children."

The police have reason to feel like neglected stepchildren. Pacer agents get an allowance of P50 to P100 a day, and actually go off on official business taking jeepneys. They lack firearms and equipment. How do they feel reading of the P300-million fund available to Naktaf for informers, knowing, too, how such funds often end up misused?

Phone lines burned on Tuesday as Chinoys frantically rang each other up, the Uy murder plunging the community into greater depths of despair. Several Chinoy families have called relatives based overseas to cancel holiday visits. Others are looking at their own suitcases, wondering if it's time to pack up and leave. Many of those who will leave are the younger and highly skilled Chinoy professionals, for example, physicians and IT specialists. If they leave, it will not be as short-term overseas contract workers but as permanent migrants, exacerbating the already serious brain drain we're having.

Capital flight, brain drain—all that's going on as well in the larger Pinoy community, all part of a frantic search for solutions: bringing in the FBI, implementing the death penalty.

I see capital punishment as a futile measure against crime, but I'm not surprised the Chinoys are so vocal about implementing the death penalty, some even suggesting public executions. Such views only reflect wider national sentiments. Even GMA has expressed support in the past for the death penalty, backtracking now only because she's running for president and is afraid of losing support from the Catholic hierarchy.

What's there to keep the criminals from going full blast, terrorizing the entire nation? Watch out, too, as Chinoy talk about public executions, about supporting vigilante groups, about putting Ping Lacson in Malacañang. Again, the Chinoys are only reflecting what many Pinoy and Pinay have in mind. Despair, no longer a monopoly of the Chinoy community, might well drive us to consider "solutions" that will, in the long term, be far worse than the problems. Perhaps we are already a nation kidnapped and hijacked, paying a ransom with our children's future.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

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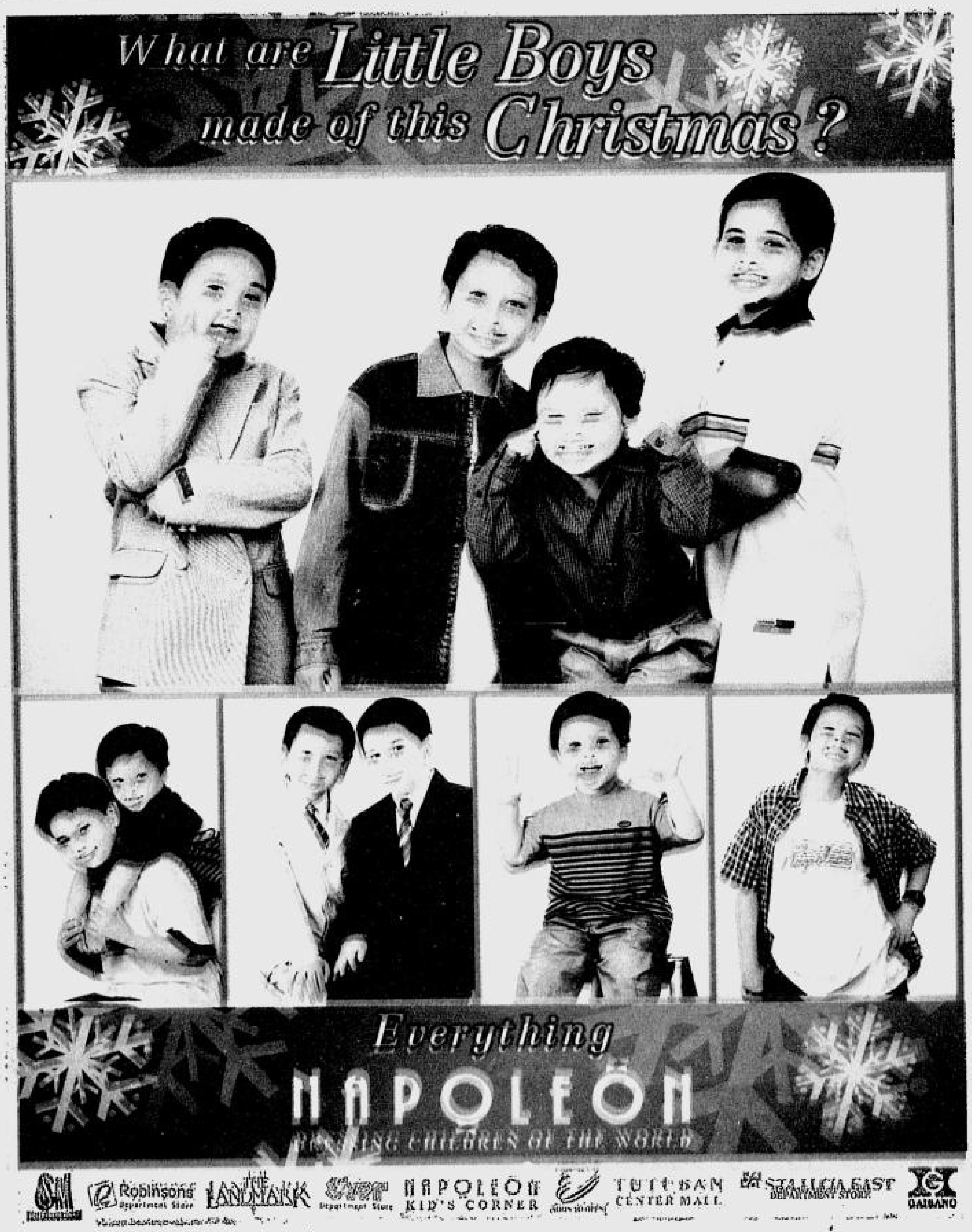
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Real cause of divisiveness

WE in the "civil society" as President Macapagal-Arroyo used to call us, do not use this term to refer to our organizations. We are people or mass organizations composed of the basic and patriotic sectors of our society.

As for the President's comment that it is because of us that the country is in a state of divisiveness and disunity, she should look at the mirror to know the real cause of divisiveness in our nation. It can still be remembered that she herself said in her Dec. 30, 2002 statement that she is the primary cause of the disunity in our country and for this reason she will not run in 2004. She may have changed her mind in running, but she being the cause of divisiveness still holds true.

So she should stop accusing the mass movement of sowing disunity, she is doing it herself. Our role in "civil society" is to work for the betterment of the majority of the people and at this moment it means kicking her out of Malacañang.

—CARL ANTHONY ALA,
deputy secretary general,
National Network of Agrarian
Reform Advocates-Youth Sector,
17-D Kasing-kasing St., QC

Harassment case already being probed

AFTER WRITING the first installment, "Like a second shadow," (PDI, 11/26/03), Rina Jimenez-David kept faith with her promise to perpetuate the same sensationalist and malicious canards, gossip and innuendoes. In rapid succession, she fired off two equally scurrilous pieces, "Confronting a culture," (PDI, 11/27/03) and "Disturbing developments." (PDI, 11/29/03) In the column, "A few good women" (PDI, 11/30/03), David devotes the last portion to peddling more of her salacious lies notwithstanding receipt of our "long letter" demanding that she cease and refrain from further comments on the merits of the case between "F" and, our client, "Dr. M." (Considering the all too obvious "hints," is there still any doubt as to the identities of "F" and "Dr. M"?)

It cannot escape attention that David knew from her interview with "F" and the latter's lawyer, Evalyn Ursua, that: A case for "sexual harassment and grave misconduct" pends before the proper forum by "F" against "Dr. M," proceedings are ongoing and evidence for both parties by now received by the five-member committee investigating "F's" complaint. Furthermore, David knew resolution of the controversy was forthcoming. David deliberately suppressed from her readers that the investigating committee is composed of three women (a professor in UP Manila, a resident and a nurse), with only two men, one of whom is a lawyer, the other a medical technician. The members were chosen at random and neither party has assailed the integrity of any member.

It begs the question, which part of our request to "allow the proceedings to take and stay its course" did David miss? David clearly fails to appreciate that true justice is one that "hears before it condemns." David made up her mind about our client's culpability for "rape" and "assault" without hearing from us. Our first letter did not merit equal time and space in the INQUIRER. Worse, this paper and David have become party to a concerted scheme to influence and preempt the decision of the committee or, alternatively, attack and undermine its integrity in the event it rules otherwise by trying to convict "Dr. M" before the bar of public opinion. David called our client a rapist. She cannot hide behind conveniently "unidentified friends from PGH."

The INQUIRER provided the medium for David to convict our client before her readers as a rapist but without due process and far removed from any legitimate forum. Both must now face the consequences of such reckless and malicious disregard of the rudiments of fair play. Your paeans to "balanced views" end up as shallow lip service.

—MICHAEL G. URETA,
Ureta Law Office,
5/F Richville Corporate Tower,
1107 Alabang Zapote Road,
Madrigal Business Park,
Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City

Guns as insurance policies

WITH THE RECENT killings because of more kidnappings and robbery in the metropolis, it may be safe to say that Juan dela Cruz can no longer count on anybody else for protection, except for his own self. The police and their other anti-crime units usually show up at the crime scene after establishments have been robbed or after victims have already been shot. But at the very moment that danger looms, no law enforcement personnel is around to serve one's need or protect one's life.

It is with this unfortunate reality in mind that I appeal to President Macapagal-Arroyo to lift the ban on the issuance of permits to carry firearms outside the residence for responsible and law-abiding gun owners. The gun ban has in no way prevented criminals and outlaws from doing their business. It has only added to their confidence that the danger to themselves is lessened since their would-be victims are helpless and unarmed.

Guns do not kill people; it is the person who pulls the trigger who does. I suggest that stiffer disciplinary action be meted out to violators of the gun ownership law, and that stricter screening measures be administered to gun owners and bearers. This stand may call for rebuttal from the other side, but one thing is very clear—guns are like insurance policies. You may not need a gun, but it is far better to have one when the need arises.

—EGAY F. CARRASCO,
San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

What's happening to the GSIS?

I HAVE been a member of the Government Service Insurance System since 1991, the year I joined the Land Bank of the Philippines. Since then, LBP has been deducting and remitting 9 percent of my basic salary for my regular monthly contribution to the GSIS. I always avail of the GSIS policy loan on a yearly "renewal" basis.

Due to financial difficulties, I renewed my policy loan with the GSIS in June 2003. However, the GSIS rejected and returned my policy loan application after three months, in September 2003, with the note "suspended policy." The GSIS neither stated the specific reason why it suspended my policy nor advised me of the requirements that I should comply with to have the suspension lifted.

I made "countless" follow-ups (through telephone) with the GSIS to find out the reasons why it had to suspend my policy. Unfortunately, I ended up like a ping-pong ball, being passed on from one GSIS department/unit to another (e.g. check releasing, Pasay-2 processing c/o Alice, and to membership c/o Ms Gudane). I got tired and irritated because nobody in the GSIS wanted to claim responsibility for answering my very simple query, which until now remains unanswered.

Our payroll division chief assured me (per bank record) that the LBP never stopped deducting (as shown in my monthly pay slips) and remitting my GSIS contributions.

In searching for a possible answer to my query, I logged on to e-GSIS and learned from there that I still have an outstanding salary loan equivalent to one month amortization amounting to P1,966.20 (inclusive of accrued interest and surcharges). Per LBP record, the entire loan had been fully paid as of Jan. 10, 2003. After comparing my LBP records with the statement of account from e-GSIS, I found out that the GSIS failed to post/record one amortization payment for the said loan. The said payment is supposed to be for the month of September 2001. The GSIS actually issued a corresponding official receipt with No. 1229366, dated Oct. 10, 2003, for the said payment.

I called the attention of the GSIS-technology unit (c/o John) and the GSIS posting unit (c/o Emma who is directly responsible for inputting LBP contributions). The two said that they were still reconciling their records. Both John and Emma, however, told me that it is not enough to suspend a policy just because there is one unpaid amortization on previous loans. I know there are millions of GSIS members who are in the same predicament as I am.

What's happening to the GSIS?

—JOSE PEPITO B. GUPO,
125 Cedar St.,
Wood Estate Village,
Molino III, Bacoor, Cavite

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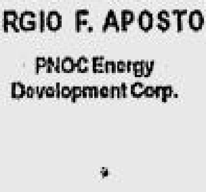
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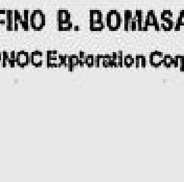
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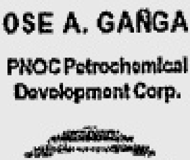
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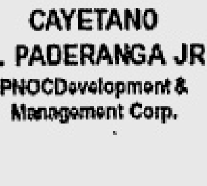
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Cop says ID system effective vs rebs

MATI, Davao Oriental—There is no need to implement a national ID system in two towns here.

Senior Supt. Catalino Cuy, provincial police chief, said the imposition of the ID system in the rebel-infested towns of Baganga and Cateel has been "very successful" in shooing away communist rebels who enter communities of Mandaya *lumad*.

But Cuy said the residents themselves requested the police and the military to implement the ID system "because the communist revolutionary movement seemed to have virtual control in their communities."

"The communist rebels are killing those who refused to pay revolutionary taxes and those who joined the *pangayao* or tribal war declared by the Mandaya *lumad* against the New People's Army rebels," he added.

On Sept. 5, the INQUIRER saw males aged 15 and above from ten Barangays of Baganga who were being made to gather in their barangay halls to have their pictures taken for the ID system.

But Lito Lao, leader of the farmers group Alyansa sa mga Mag-uuma sa Sidlakang Dabaw, said the ID system was a project of Mayor Jerry Morales, the local police and the military.

Lao said the ID system "was no different (from) martial rule."

"It's the military, not the civilians, who rules this town. The town mayor and his constituents are voiceless and the local Catholic Church is unable to perform its task of teaching everyone to respect human rights," he said.

He lambasted the local Catholic Church for not lifting a finger against it.

Lao said the ID system was first imposed in Barangays Bugac, Palina, Kamanganngan, Matanog, Katihan, Cabuyao, Bisay, Maribuhok, Uyongan and Tigbawan all in Baganga town.

He said the ID system has hampered the movement of farmers. Farmers, he said, are having a difficult time selling their goods to neighboring villages because of the ID system.

"The ID system would really hamper our movement. It will really affect our economic activities like selling goods to neighboring villages and it would only lead to more abuses by the government troops," he said.

Communist rebels have been accused of extortion by sectoral Rep. Etta Rosales for allegedly extending their taxation to ordinary citizens.

The military has accused the rebels of raising funds by imposing revolutionary taxes even on teachers and farmers.

The rebels were also accused of recruiting minors for combat operations and underground activities. *Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

1,000 Paoay folk protest misuse of meager funds

PAOAY, Ilocos Norte—Close to 1,000 residents staged a protest rally here Monday to press officials to act on an audit report detailing how the town's funds amounting to P3.5 million were allegedly misused.

Organized by a group called the Bangon-Paoay movement, the protest action ignored the raging controversy involving the 2001 mayoral race of this town.

Lawyer Ferdinand Ignacio, the movement's legal counsel, immediately brushed aside suspicions that the rally was meant to benefit court-declared Mayor Bonifacio Clemente.

Clemente was declared winner in the 2001 elections in a two-year-old election protest he filed against incumbent Mayor Nenuca Reginita Evangelista.

The ruling by the Ilocos Norte regional trial court is on appeal at the Commission on Elections second division.

Evangelista was earlier quoted as saying that the protest was designed to advance the interest of her political foes. She left for the United States last week.

"This is not a rally with political color. We did not touch on the issue of election protest. This is merely a vehicle to express residents' concerns on legitimate issues," Ignacio, a known Clemente supporter, said.

He said the rally was meant to push officials to act on the alleged misuse of funds as reported by the Commission on Audit in 2001.

A special audit report in 2001 showed that P500,000 was used to pay alleged overpriced construction projects while more than P3 million from specific fund sources was used to pay for non-related expenditures.

The review of the town's financial transactions and operations covered 1998 to 2000.

According to Ignacio, the commission also discovered alleged fund malversation amounting to P2.8 million also in 2001.

He said the Office of the Ombudsman had ordered COA provincial chief Alejandrino Que to file charges against the town's treasurer for the alleged anomaly. *Cristina Arzadon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Army files case of rebellion vs 2 youths in Bohol

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—A complaint of rebellion has been filed against two youths who were picked up about 10 hours after an early morning clash between government troopers and suspected communist rebels in Mabini town, Bohol last Nov. 20.

Francisco Abrea, 23 and Mark (not his real name), 15, both of Candijay town, were accused of rebellion in a case filed before the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor last Nov. 28 and docketed as information sheet no. 1190.

Attached to the complaint were the affidavits of two members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) who were part of the 11-man joint team that encountered the rebels.

A police officer asked that their names be withheld.

In his affidavit, one Cafgu member said he was part of the joint team that surprised a group of New People's Army rebels at about 6 a.m. last Nov. 20 in Sitio Pasto, Barangay San Isidro, Mabini town, about 110 kilometers southwest of this city.

Alerted

He said that while they were approaching the house of Martiniano Asas, the latter's daughter saw him and alerted the rebels inside the house who immediately opened fire at them while jumping out of the house.

The Cafgu member said the government troopers composed of Army soldiers and militiamen fired back. After about 30 minutes, two of the rebels were killed.

The communist guerrillas escaped and left their slain comrades and two M-16 Armalite rifles.

He said the others including the wounded were able to escape toward the mountainous areas in the direction of Ubay town.

The Cafgu member said another team of soldiers eventually picked up Abrea and Mark in Barangay Aguipo, Mabini.

He claimed that the two were part of a group of communist rebels and tried to drag a wounded comrade who eventually fled.

The Cafgu member claimed he was about 30 to 40 meters away from where the youths tried to drag their fallen comrade. He said Abrea was carrying a Carbine rifle while Mark was armed with an M-16 rifle at the time.

Another Cafgu member corroborated his companion's statements, saying Mark, who was carrying an M-16, fled the house.

Peace observers to arrive in Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—The seven-man International Monitoring Team (IMT), which is observing the peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), is arriving in the middle of this month to check developments on a ceasefire agreement between the government and the MILF.

This was announced Tuesday by Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, Armed Forces vice chief of staff and the chair of the government panel on the Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH).

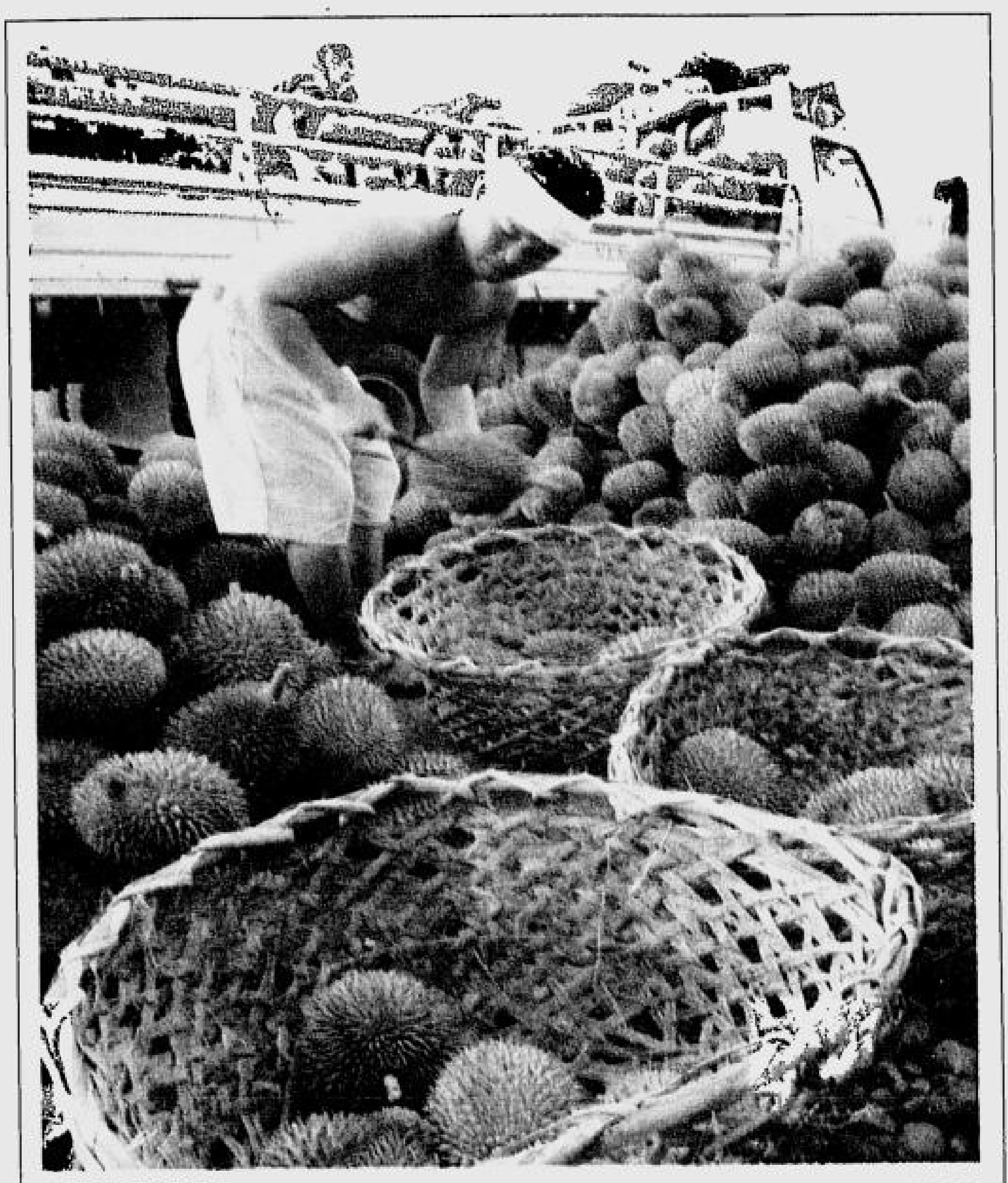
Garcia said the IMT headed by Malaysia will observe efforts to end hostilities in Mindanao.

He said the team will stay here in the country as long as it is needed.

"They (IMT members) might hold office here while they are monitoring the implementation of peace accords between the two parties," he said.

Garcia, however, admitted that there are still some reports of violations of the ceasefire agreement but "these are concretely addressed."

Benjie Midtimbang, Garcia's counterpart in the MILF, said despite the violations, there was improved peace and order on the island compared to the past. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



DAVAO FRUIT

VAL HANDUMON/PDI PHOTO

A worker unloads *durian* on Magsaysay Boulevard for distribution to retail outlets in Davao City. Davao is known for *durian* and other fruits that become expensive when sold elsewhere.

Program for Mindanao peace extended

COTABATO CITY—Organizers of the Mindanao Week of Peace here have decided to extend for another week the celebration to further increase awareness on peace advocacy and peace building efforts.

Fr. Ramon Ma. Bernabe, OMI, president of Notre Dame University here, said organizers wanted to double ongoing efforts for peace.

The week-long celebration was to end Wednesday (Dec. 3) but activities related to peace building and peace awareness would continue until Dec. 10, the International Human Rights Day.

Father Bernabe also chairs the NDU Peace Center, an institution that promotes a culture of peace and culture of life in Mindanao. The peace center is leading the week-long celebration in Central Mindanao.

"Peace advocacy and recognition of human rights are inseparable so we decided to continue the celebration," Bernabe told the INQUIRER.

He said the additional week could be concentrated on convincing people to be more caring, more forgiving and more understanding.

Various activities aimed at developing the culture of peace have been done and would continue as stakeholders actively participate in the program.

Muslim religious leaders and Church-based organizations have been holding peace forums and peace education programs in schools and far-flung villages.

"This is something deeply personal and deeply spiritual," Bernabe said, adding that the end of the fasting month for Muslims can be connected to the start of the advent season for Christmas of Christians.

"We are pursuing efforts to nurture the spiritual roots of these separate yet inter-related holy celebrations of Christians and Muslims," he added.

This year's theme is "Healing through Forgiveness: Key to Total Human Development."

In his message, Cotabato Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI, DD, said this year's celebration is more significant than usual.

"Our times are dismaying and demoralizing, our economy is down, one reason is that our politicians in Manila are playing circus-type political games based on extreme political partisanship," he said.

"Peace in Mindanao, peace in the whole country—is this just wishful thinking? An illusion? Yes, if we do nothing. No, if we put our efforts together and not leave the work of forging peace to politicians and to combatants," Quevedo said. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Women's group hails CBCP guidelines on erring priests

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—A women's group here praised the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines for coming out with guidelines on how the Church would deal with priests facing sexual harassment charges.

"We are happy that the CBCP came out with more concrete guidelines and sanctions on priests facing sexual harassment charges. We view this as a positive effort in correcting erring members of the clergy," said Vernie Yocogan-Diano, chair of the Innabuyog-Gabriela here. "Somehow, it gives justice to the women victims."

She said her group is asking Church leaders to defrock priests involved in sexual abuse or harassment cases.

Fr. David Ganggangan, secretary to Baguio-Benguet Bishop Carlito Cenzon, said the guidelines have already been relayed to priests although the Vatican has yet to approve them.

The guidelines identify cases of sexual misconduct such as fathering a child, living in with a woman, adultery, sexual harassment, abuse of women lay workers, rape, coercion to engage in sex and homosexual relationships.

These also instruct the bishop or other superiors of an erring priest to surrender him to the police should the court issue a warrant of arrest.

On Oct. 3, the late Judge Benjamin Buena sentenced to four months in prison Fr. Nardo Cayat, who pleaded guilty to charges of sexual assault.

Cayat, a Catholic priest assigned to Itogon, Benguet, was found guilty of charges of "forcible acts of lasciviousness" that a woman filed on Aug. 27, 2002. The woman belongs to a prominent family in Benguet.

In a recent press conference, the woman claimed that Cayat's superiors pressured and pleaded to her not to file the case in court.

She told reporters that shortly after the incident happened on Aug. 8 last year, a Church representative had pleaded to her not to file the case in court as this would "shame the whole Catholic Church."

"But I'm not against the Church. This is a personal matter for which the priest must answer," she said. "And if the priest could do this to me, he could do it to anybody."

But Ganggangan denied the woman's accusation that the Church had been protecting erring priests.

GMA sends team to check smuggling of sugar

By Carla Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has sent an Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Center (ASIIC) team to Negros Occidental to address the complaint of sugar planters that smuggling could be the cause of the plunging prices of sugar.

Gov. Joseph Maranon said the President met Sunday night with ASIIC chief Col. Carlos Holganza and told him to act on the problem raised by the sugar planters.

"I was told she personally handpicked the team and instructed them to seriously go after the smugglers," he said.

The ASIIC team composed of Holganza, Lt. Col. Rodulfo Santiago and Supt. Roy Gonzales, met Monday with Maranon and Negros sugar planters to determine where sugar is being smuggled.

Maranon said they have been receiving reports that sugar smuggling was rampant in Mindanao.

In fact, he said, they "have been hearing that the different ports in southern Philippines are now 'producing' sugar."

By "producing" sugar, this meant that sugar smuggled into the country were being repacked and placed in sacks that bear the name of domestic sugar producers.

Holganza confirmed incidents of sugar smuggling in Mindanao but he said that based on reports they received, these could be considered "small time," involving small vessels suspected to come from Malaysia.

In the second week of November, law enforcers seized 168 sacks of smuggled sugar in Zamboanga City, which were found to have been repacked using sacks owned by the Negros-based Victorias Milling Co.

Holganza said his team would produce results in its fight against smuggling before the end of this month.

He said the ASIIC is strengthening its forces in Mindanao to catch sugar smugglers. "This will include educating our law enforcers on how to detect smuggled sugar," he said.

Gonzalez has been designated as ASIIC desk officer for special concerns on sugar smuggling and will act as liaison with the sugar industry, Holganza said.

When sugar milling started in October, the price of raw sugar was at P845 per 50-kilo bag. Despite continued demand however, especially with the onset of the Christmas season, the price has been steadily dropping and is now pegged at P765 per kg.

Sugar planters are alarmed since sugar production costs range from P700 to P750 per kg.

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Blast fishers strike back

By Mei Magsino
Mamburao, Oriental Mindoro

EVEN before people of Mamburao in Occidental Mindoro knew that it existed, their tuna industry is about to die.

Blast fishing, transportation problems and brownouts have brought millions of pesos in losses to tuna traders and fisherfolk, but nobody has done anything about it.

The capital town has five *casa* or fish traders who provide gasoline, food and ice to fishermen who catch giant tunas that weigh 35 to 105 kilos. A tuna is considered export-quality if its flesh is pink or red in color.

One *casa* supports five to 10 boats, and each vessel has at least five crewmen and can catch at least five giant tunas.

Before illegal fishers invaded the Mindoro Strait, a *casa* could export four to five tons of giant tuna a day. But since the illegal fishers destroyed the *payaw* or artificial fish sanctuaries, the trader could take only one or two giant tunas to Manila a week.

While some fishermen manage to haul in some of the tunas, transporting them to Manila through the Batangas pier is also a problem. Because tuna falls in the category of perishable goods, shipping lines give cargo priority to rice, which could last for years.

When the tuna traders are denied access to the ships, their catch either goes back to the town market and sold cheap or are buried.

More blast fishers

Rodolfo Genanda, a *payaw* owner, said the industry was now beyond revival because four more commercial fishing boats were added to the seven that have blasted their fish sanctuary along the Mindoro Strait since July last year.

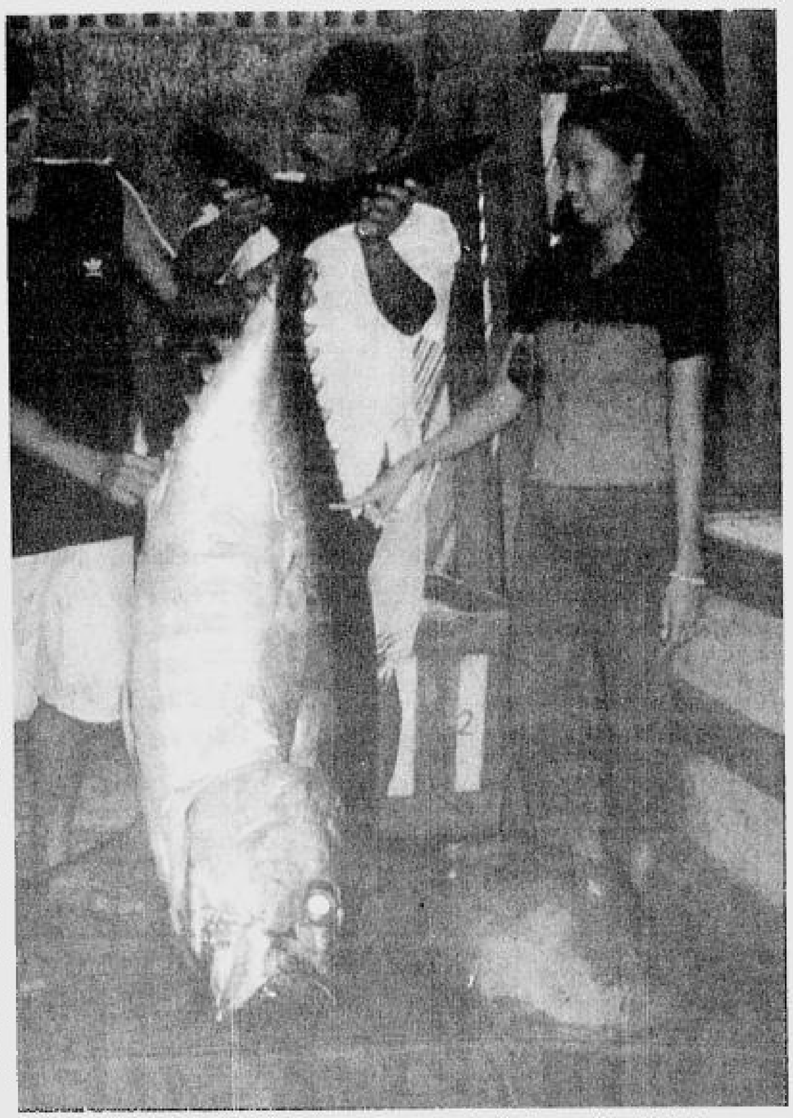
Payaw owners and other fishermen identified three of the fishing boats that engaged in dynamite fishing in their area last year as the MV Noel, MV Jessica and MV JR.

Genanda said when the INQUIRER published a story on this problem last year, the blast fishers stopped their activities for about six months, but they returned with more powerful explosives that did not spare even the small *payaw*.

"It's hopeless to invest our time, money and effort to the *payaw* that the dynamite fishers will just destroy and leave in ruins," he said. The sanctuary has provided food for its owner's family as the fish there can be caught for food or sold to the market.

Since the *payaw* could indicate where the giant tunas could be found, most fishermen in the province have put up their own structures. A *payaw* costs P50,000 to P60,000 to construct.

But since the dynamite fishers invaded the Mindoro Strait, *payaw* owners found their fish sanctuaries blasted to smithereens. Even the fish that once teemed there were blown to pieces and left to rot at the bottom of the sea.



THE CATCH for the day: an 83-kilo giant tuna. Abelle Evangelista (right), a tuna trader, says the fishermen in Mamburao used to have hundreds of giant tunas caught in the Mindoro Strait.

MEI MAGSINO

In dynamite fishing, only 15 to 30 percent of the fish is recovered. Those engaged in the illegal method select only sardines and mackerel, and leave the other fish to rot.

Transport

The woes of the fishing industry not only involved the blasted *payaw*.

Some fishermen who, with luck and good weather, are able to catch giant tunas during their stay of four to five days at sea, they could barely get reservations to transport their products to the shipping lines.

"The roll-on-roll-off boats give priority to rice cargoes, even if they know that tuna is a perishable good. Tuna traders here find it difficult to place reservations in boats going to the Batangas pier," said Abelle Evangelista, 29, owner of Abelle's Fishbuyer.

When they are not accommodated in the boats, the tunas are transported back by jeepney to the Mamburao market and sold cheaper, sometimes 75 percent lower than the original price, Evangelista said.

Still, people would not buy all of it. "Instead of waiting for the flesh to get stale, we just dig a hole in the ground and bury the tuna," Evangelista said. "That will mean too much loss and too much wasted food because we weren't given a chance to transport our product."

Brownouts

The town's frequent brownout also add to their woes, he said. Since the ice plants need electricity to produce ice to keep the tuna fresh, frequent power outage means less or no ice in the town's ice plants. When the tuna loses freshness and gets stale, that translates to less income .

"We also bury the giant tunas during the town's worst brownouts," Evangelista said.

Federico Barrera, 67, who has been in the business since 1958, said he was about to go into a joint venture with a Japanese canning company in the 1980s, but the plan didn't push through.

"If only we were able to put up a tuna canning facility here, we won't be burying tunas when they get stale," Barrera said.

Heirs seek eviction of Naga's City Hall

By Alan Pelayo
Naga City

IN MANY instances, the city government of Naga in Camarines Sur has played tough when dealing with squatters. In fact, the head of its task force on illegal construction and squatting, retired police Supt. Benjamin Navarro, has been called the "Demolition Man" for leading operations to evict squatters in Barangays Sabang, Concepcion Grande and Cararayan.

Now, it's the city officials' turn to feel what it's like to be on the receiving end.

If the grandchildren and heirs of Don Macario A. Mariano and his wife Irene are to be believed, City Hall and nine national government agencies are squatting on their land for the past 45 years without paying them a single centavo.

The claimants want to get back the five-hectare property in the City Heights Subdivision, where buildings of the City Hall, the Hall of Justice, Commission on Elections, National Bureau of Investigation, Land Transportation Office, Bureau of Fire Protection and Integrated Bar of the Philippines, among other national bodies, now stand.

They have given the city government until the end of this month to vacate the premises.

One of the heirs, court-appointed administrator Danilo David S. Mariano, insists that his grandfather never signed a deed of donation turning over ownership of the real estate to the city as the new site for its offices in 1954. The charter city was then only six years old and was renting a building on Peñafrancia Avenue.

"There is a deed of donation," city legal officer Nelson S. Legacion declared. But the city government cannot produce a copy of the deed, and the land title of the subdivision does not carry any annotation that the lot owners had donated the property to the city.

Offer

Legacion asserted that in 1954, the elder Mariano wrote a letter to the city government offering the lot on condition that the City Hall be built there. The lot consists of Blocks 25 and 26 of Transfer Certificate of Title 671, he said.

A resolution accepting the donation was passed by the city council and ratified subsequently, he added. He stressed that the documents were still intact.

Mariano has sent a letter to Mayor Jesse M. Robredo demanding that the city government vacate the property. Part of the letter read:

"Should the city of Naga fail to heed this formal demand within the period provided, (the heirs of Don Macario Mariano) will be constrained to file an action in court (for ejection) and that the city of Naga shall be charged also a reasonable monthly rental for the use of the premises at the rate of P50 per square meter or a sum total of P2,500,000 per month until the city of Naga shall vacate the premises."

The heirs expect to collect some P500 million in back rentals.

In Barangay Balagtas, the sale and donation of another property of the Marianos, a 32,000-square-meter parcel, to the city government "were documented" and the transactions were "upheld by various resolutions" of the city council.

Still another property, whose ownership is being claimed by the Marianos, is now occupied by the barangay hall in Dayangdang.

"Your occupancy of the lot and the construction thereon of several improvements was without the knowledge nor the consent of its owners," Mariano wrote barangay chair Gerry D. R. Pelagio.

He said that through the years, the Mariano family has "tolerated" the occupancy of the site by the city government. "Now that we are in need of the pieces of property. we want these back," he said.

Not worried

Legacion said the city was not worried.

Once a property is taken by the government and has been used for public purposes, the owner of the property could no longer claim it, he said. He cited the cases of Militante vs Court of Appeals in 2000 and Alfonso vs Pasay City in 1960.

Mariano, however, contended that the length of time that the city government has been using the property "not properly made a subject of a deed of donation" could not be presented as a defense and a reason to claim ownership.

The law states that "possession by license or mere tolerance (by the owners) does not give rise to acquisition by prescription," he said.

"But then, where is this document of donation? Show us your papers" the heir said. "How come that until now, after almost 50 years, the deed of donation has never been presented for registration and that the Transfer Certificate of Title No. 671 was never annotated to reflect the donation, so as to re-convey its title to the city government of Naga?"

'Marayaw': Mangyan ritual of healing

By Madonna T. Virola
Naujan, Oriental Mindoro

AFTER about two hours of travel by jeepney, including making stopovers and hurdling rough terrain from the Calapan City market to Naujan town in the south of Oriental Mindoro, one reaches Barangay Paitan, where the Alangan-Mangyan people live simple lives.

Although already accessible to lowlanders, the indigenous group has preserved its unique culture, including a healing ritual called *marayaw*.

While the tribe considers *marayaw* to be sacred, an elder consented to share the practice with this writer so that others may also learn from it.

Rexie Taywan brought this writer to where his grandfather, Tomas Taywan, a *balaunan* or one who performs the *marayaw*, lives.

Small house

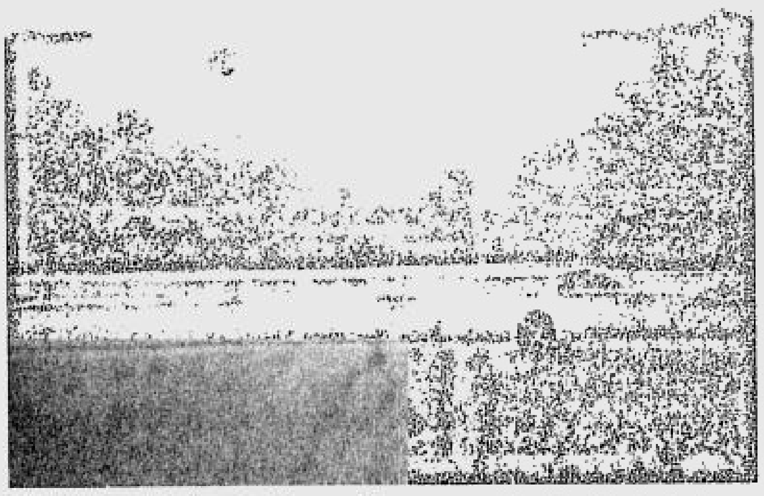
A climb to a steep area led to the old man, addressed as *aplaki*. Tomas welcomed the group as he squatted beside a small door of a house. The soft illumination cast by a mini-flashlight enabled his visitors to catch his warm and child-like smile.

Despite the poverty in the house, the vibrations felt good.

Tomas was willing to share his healing knowledge and even allowed this writer to take pictures of him, but his wife intervened strongly, saying that it could reduce her husband's power. She also warned against taking a shot at their house as it had the same effect.

The *aplaki* led the group to their small house that has no partition. It is where they dine, talk and perform the *marayaw*.

"The *marayaw* is like singing (*magbaren*)," said Tomas. Through singing, one is able to see the cause of an illness, which is usually in the form of an animal.



IN THIS mountain lives the Alangan-Mangyan sacred healing ritual called "marayaw."

MADONNA T. VIROLA

He cited these examples: for headache and fever, one sees a monkey; for measles, a dog; for swelling, a snake; boils, a pig; and if one is dying, a flying bird.

One can see fire if a person has diarrhea and stomachache, and the image of a man or woman, if the person suffers from dizziness and insanity, he said.

The period of treatment depends on the gravity of the illness. For severe headaches or some indications of insanity, it may take three nights of the *marayaw* or more.

The sick is approached by the *balaunan*, who should possess, among other qualities, kindness and courtesy. The performer does not curse, take advantage of or hurt other people, is broad-minded and faithful to his or her spouse, and is healthy (does not stay late at night).

A crushed ginger, the size of a candy, is rubbed on the painful or affected part of the body while blowing air through it. The ginger is then thrown away. This part of the ritual is meant to frighten the bad spirit that is believed to have brought the disease.

Tomas said many people, particularly infants, have been healed through the ritual. Rexie confirmed this by citing her own experiences.

If he or she is not healed, the patient is transferred to another *marayaw*. "The *marayaw* is not always applicable to anybody," said Tomas.

Bad spirit

The *aplaki* described a bad spirit as a male sporting a beard. The spirit dwells in the waterfall, creek and river.

The bad spirit sees people as wild pigs, Tomas said.

"They catch us, eat us, bring us to their house which is a big mountain like Makalook (a mountain in Paitan)," he said. "If they catch the wild pig, a person will no longer live."

Thus, in diagnosing a patient, the *balaunan* checks if the bad spirit has brought a wild boar and has taken its body for viand.

If the jaw of the wild pig is on the roasting place or the jaw is being taken away in the dream of the *balaunan*, the sick is safe and will live.

In the *marayaw*, both the spirit or soul (*abiyan*) and body of a person are treated.

When the patient gets well, he or she is advised not to go where the bad spirit came from.

The *marayaw* is a non-conventional healing method, and an *aplaki* speaks his own language.

The healing ritual uses herbs, the "third eye," the power of dreams, and good wishes for the patient to get well. The healer's honest care for the patient, not for profit, makes healing effective. Believing that the power comes from God, the *balaunan* heals anytime, without charging any fee at all.

Pranic healing

Banjo Quirino, an Alangan-Mangyan student of Tugdaan town who served as guide to the area, said the *marayaw* was like pranic healing in some ways.

Quirino recently attended a seminar on pranic healing, an alternative healing method founded by Filipino-Chinese Master Choa Kok Sui. Because of practical results and the transformation in people's lives, this science of energy has earned international respect.

"There is no touch but [there is] feeling [of] the energy," Quirino explained. Sending ginger to Rexie (by her grandfather) for her headache is like distant healing, he added.

A year ago, a senior pranic healer, Faith Sawey related that during a seminar she conducted for the Mangyan people, it was so natural for them to see colors and feel energies.

She added that the natural lifestyle and setting of the Mangyan were advantageous to healing activities.

Paitan has three *balaunan* for every 300 people, said Regie.

Asked what happens if the healer dies, *aplaki* Tomas said "The *marayaw* knowledge is transferred to the grandchild or children by saying 'you take over the singing.' Then he or she will have a dream."

Asked what she will say if her *aplaki*, in his dying moment, would ask Rexie to sing in turn, she responded: "Thanks."

Wish ng Kabataan sa Pasko
-AKBAYAN Youth
FPJ sana maghanangay kapitan poe muna kayo
Gloria sana wag ka ng tumakbo
Roco sana magpaka totoo ka...
Ping sana managot ka mga kaso m
AKBAYAN!

NO ONE'S good enough for the Akbayan youth which launches on Wednesday "Wish ng Kabataan sa Pasko" to challenge the presidential bets to seriously address the aspirations of the young.

JOAN BONDOC

Firms plan court action to stop hike

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

LOCAL manufacturing companies are seeking to block the implementation of an order granting Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) a rate increase in January.

Following a meeting of its board of directors, the Federation of Philippine Industries said it had directed its legal team to prepare the filing of a court injunction against the rate increase.

"I don't see any urgency in the grant of a probationary rate hike to Meralco. I believe that that the government can hold any decision on the matter until after the May elections," federation president Jesus Arranza said.

Arranza said the FPI board was particularly concerned about the government's decision to forgo public hearings before granting any rate increase because it would undermine the legitimate rate-setting process.

"Any rate hike should not be granted on a provisional basis. All rate hikes should be granted only after public hearings are held," Arranza said. He said that granting a provisional rate increase would unduly affect the public hearings.

Arranza said the FPI, made up of companies involved in a broad swath of manufacturing industries from basic commodities to consumer durables, was apprehensive over the additional burden on its members' operating costs.

The Philippines has one of the highest power rates in the region and this is one of the reasons local manufactured goods cannot compete with imports.

Industrialist Raul T. Concepcion said the Energy Regulatory Commission could still hold public hearings in the next few weeks and still meet its original target of implementing the provisional rate increase by Jan. 4.

"The people should express their feelings in the hearings instead of demonstrating in the streets," he said.

GMA asks energy board to reconsider . . .

From page A1

power rate increase to a "possible candidate for 2004.'"

Alluding to the deal, opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. called on the ERC on Tuesday not to allow itself to be "an instrument of political expediency."

De Castro dared

Opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara dared De Castro to announce whether he would be Ms Macapagal's running mate. "If Kabayan (De Castro) announces [his decision], I think then the suspicion of Senator Pimentel will have been confirmed," he told reporters.

De Castro cried foul over Angara's statement, saying that this was not only "unfair" to him but to Ms Macapagal and the Lopez family, who had been behind his career as a broadcast journalist and later as a politician.

"What's their basis to say it's a done deal?" De Castro told reporters. "Why should I enter into a deal? No. No way."

In a statement, the senator dismissed as "baseless and malicious" the insinuations against him, the President and the Lopezes. "They should stop fabricating malicious stories, instead, the factors behind the increase should be thoroughly discussed in a public hearing, in an open and transparent manner," he said.

He said that if he had the power, "my plea would be for the poor to be spared from any increase."

De Castro said talk against him might have been meant to destroy his candidacy should he decide to run for a higher office.

Under pressure

At a news briefing, De Castro acknowledged that he was being pressured to make a decision by the people making him the political offers, the voters as reflected in the surveys, and the media. He said it was a matter of time before he and the President would meet.

"No one will disagree that Noli de Castro is leading in the surveys and the consideration for Noli, for whatever position, is precisely because he is leading in the surveys and not because of anything or any arrangement," Defensor said.

Alvarez suggested that the ruling party consider other vice presidential candidates, like Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Robert Barbers.

Power issue

"The campaign is evolving and there are no fixed and unalterable parameters," Alvarez said in Malacañang. "If the power issue will become a factor, the advisers of the President will have to take into account and (decide that) popularity itself be junked in order to disabuse the public's mind that the President is responsible for the behavior of a quasi-judicial body."

Alvarez said De Castro was being drafted as Ms Macapagal's running mate in the hope that, as a "media-genic personality," he can add more votes for the President. But he said this was "not necessarily" going to happen.

With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

FROM A FILIPINO INVENTOR- ENTREPENEUR

THRU : HER EXCELLENCY GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO

Our Countrymen,

As the November festival month which the Department of Science & Technology (DOST) dedicates to the Filipino inventors now draws to a close, after all the nice words have been said and all the merrymakings done, I, as a bonafide Filipino inventor, would like to say a final word, a disturbing truth, not only for myself, but, I sincerely believe, also on behalf of the majority of the Filipino people, including all our inventors.

In 1961, as a Filipino entomologist, inventor and entrepreneur, with a capital of only 400 pesos, I started a single-proprietorship pest-control outfit in the heart of Manila, using technologies and pesticides that were all inventions of mine. My pesticides, all derived from indigenous and natural botanical materials, had all been properly patented, tested, licensed by the government. It's been 42 years now, and in all those years my outfit has never received any human or environment poisoning complaint against any of our pesticides, which have been proven to be uniquely effective, safe, environment-friendly.

Today, that single-proprietorship is, in fact, a multimillion-peso corporation - MAPECON Philippines, Inc. - considered by many, even by our fiercest detractors, as one of the most successful Philippine corporations, with about 400 employees, more than 30 branches nationwide, 38 Patents and nine Patent-Pendings.

Through the years, having been a TOYM Awardee, a "Most Outstanding Inventor of the Philippines" Awardee of the DOST, and a Constitutional Convention delegate (Negros Oriental), I have always worked very hard, with my family and employees, to make MAPECON a 100-percent Filipino and Christian corporation through creative, honest work. For us, MAPECON now is actually on its 42nd-year implementation of its "100-year Plan To Make The Corporation A 100-percent Filipino MAPECON INTERNATIONAL."

It is true that giant foreign firms - multinationals - in their intense, endless maneuverings for economic supremacy, perpetually move to eliminate Filipino inventors and entrepreneurs out of their way.

And the saddest part is that our good leaders could only watch helplessly while Filipino inventors and entrepreneurs are being boldly violated, because the moneyed multinationals simply never run out of Filipino pawns they could use against the Filipino inventors and entrepreneurs. Our leaders could only watch helplessly while the foreigners slow down to a crawl our Science-and-Technology efforts, despite the existence of the Filipinos' prior rights, incentives laws, and even Court victories.

Consider these:

- About two weeks ago, an international convention-exhibit on pest control was held in a glamorous hotel in Manila, -with delegates from different countries participating. Dubbed "FAOPManila," the event was undeniably a big opportunity to showcase and market our Philippine-made pesticides and technologies around the world. In the Philippines, MAPECON is the only pest-control company that makes its own pesticides and has its own technologies - patented Filipino pesticides and modern pest-control technologies. All the other companies import their pesticides and technologies. MAPECON even has its patented Phosphine Fumigant, which could be the best alternative to all the phased-out and banned fumigants - a product which pest-controllers all over the world have been looking for. MAPECON has also diversified into Activated Carbon and "Green Charcoal"-to-Hydrogen Cooking Fuel, all exportable.
- But the organizers of the "global" convention-exhibit did not allow MAPECON to have any booth during the event. Those multinational foreigners and their Filipino cohorts, distributors and applicators, were out to, at all cost, prevent the Filipino inventions and technologies from being showcased and marketed around the world, and even right here in the Philippines for that matter.
- To us, it was, and it should be, very clear that the FAOPManila move was part of the unjust harassments that are being implemented against MAPECON - an extension of the despicable harassments that the FPA (Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority) has been carrying out against MAPECON, for almost 30 years now!
- The FPA is a government body, a remnant of the Marcos regime, specifically the "Masagana 99" Agriculture program of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos, where only giant foreign pesticide firms were allowed to supply pesticides, and where they made a killing. Not too many people have heard about the FPA. This government agency keeps a very low profile - silent and unseen as a contented boa constrictor. MAPECON is 14 years older than the FPA, and we did witness the birth of the FPA at the hands of the moneyed multinationals, in an arrogant culture of corruption during the Marcos era.
- Created under Presidential Decree 1144 of Marcos, the FPA was put in place to justify the importation of fertilizer and pesticides. As it turned out, however, the FPA became a pawn protector of the moneyed foreign pesticide firms; many of the imported pesticides the FPA had "registered" - allowed to be used in the Philippines -killed many Filipinos, caused so much diseases and environment destruction. As reported in a series of investigative stories in the PDI, FPA-registered foreign pesticides turned up harmful pesticides that had already been banned in advanced countries, even in their countries of origin, and were just being dumped in the Philippines. The Congressional Commission on Agricultural Modernization is presently recommending for the abolition of the FPA in line, among others, with the Commission's thrust to rid the bureaucracy of "too many layers of regulation." Modernization has been envisioned to open the pesticides market to deserving Filipinos with modern, indigenous, proven , patented and sustainable inventions and innovations and to finally give the Filipino what most of them have been aching for -- an equal business playingfield against the foreign pesticide firms right here in the Philippines.
- The FPA also became useful to the multinational pesticide firms as a tool for eliminating the foreigners' only Filipino-company competition in pest control in the Philippines - MAPECON. The FPA stealthily expanded its jurisdiction by itself, outside the law, and for about 30 years now, the FPA has been unjustly harassing MAPECON.
- During the Martial Law era, when its Gestapo-style assaults to padlock MAPECON failed, the FPA began filing Court cases against MAPECON left and right - from Manila all the way to Zamboanga. For more than 20 years, the FPA harassed MAPECON with Court cases. But the FPA lost, miserably - from the RTC all the way to the Supreme Court. With God's help, MAPECON won. In a total of eight FPA-vs-MAPECON cases in the Courts, the FPA never won a single case against MAPECON. The Court ruled that MAPECON is outside the jurisdiction of the FPA and that MAPECON had been adequately licensed by the National Committee on Urban Pest Control (NCUPC) and by the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI Licenses Nos. 4 & 13 and BPI-certified Satisfactory Results Reports of MAPECON's rice pest control in different provinces,) the Food and Drug Administration (FDA Registration), and even by the Department of Health (Health Circular 155-S-75), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and by the DOST since MAPECON's pesticides and technologies are patented inventions, have passed all Patent tests, and are properly covered by RA 3850 (now RA 7459 or the Inventors and Inventions' Incentives Act). As embodied in the Bill of Rights in the Philippine Constitution, no law should be passed that would abrogate or annul the prior rights of MAPECON under its legitimate status granted by the aforementioned laws and licenses many years before the FPA was created. In effect, therefore, MAPECON does not need any FPA registration.
- The Court Decision declaring that MAPECON is outside the jurisdiction of the FPA became Final and Executory at the Supreme Court on September 20, 1995.
- The said Court Decision has been further strengthened and affirmed by government mandates for MAPECON, such as Presidential Proclamation No. 990, series of 1997, and by DILG Circulars Nos. 186 and 193, series of 2003, which, among others, launched the Franchise System of the EPAMP (Environmental Pest Abatement Maintenance Program), which MAPECON is presently implementing in different cities and barangays nationwide with the NCUPC.
- But the FPA, side by side with the multinationals, would not respect the Philippine law here. Having lost with Finality at the Supreme Court, the FPA simply shifted to its dirty-tricks department, cleverly going around the law, and continued harassing MAPECON, up to now. In arrogant defiance of the law, the FPA has been carrying out A dirty tactic where it sends out FPA letters to MAPECON's customers and prospects, "informing" the latter that MAPECON "is not registered with the FPA," scaring away clients and prospects, up to now. Also, the FPA, with its shrewd mastery of the red tapes, manipulates local-government bodies, such as committees, sections and councils, into delaying the issuance of business permits and clearances to MAPECON branches.
- And the injustice is not limited to the area of business permits in the provinces but has also crept into major situations where the government (specifically the Bureau of Customs and the Central Bank) would not allow MAPECON to export or to import the few ingredients it needs to maximize its pest-control production, while, on the other hand, the government allows the multinationals here to export and to import all the ingredients they need.
- How could those government officials, those Filipinos, do this to Filipino inventors and entrepreneurs?....

At present, the multinationals and their Filipino cohorts are glamorously lobbying for the passage of more laws that would strengthen their dominance and monopoly.

On the other hand, MAPECON, having won in the Judiciary, has formally submitted to the Office of the President of the Philippines a complaint against the FPA harassments, which has remained "pending" in the Malacañang bureaucracy for almost two years now! In the final analysis, all that MAPECON is asking for now is Equity - a leveled playingfield for MAPECON as it competes against the multinationals.

Despite the odds, MAPECON, in its tradition of faith and courage, still believes that Nationalism, Patriotism, would still prevail. To be sure, good people are still not in short supply in this country.

MAPECON is expressing its heartfelt gratitude to the good Court people in the Judiciary, for the Justice they gave to MAPECON, upholding MAPECON's position of legitimacy outside the jurisdiction of the FPA.

Deeply, MAPECON is likewise very thankful to the thousands of customers who have made MAPECON still the undisputed modern leader in pest control in the Philippines. As part of its intensified modern services, MAPECON, with its subsidiary corporation. MAPECON Green Charcoal Philippines, Inc., has put in place a fast system where Filipinos can now dial a single number -- (02) 525-0434 - in any key city in the Philippines, and the caller would be promptly visited by a MAPECON representative who could: 1) conduct for free a survey on termite infestation, or any pest problem for that matter, 2) demonstrate the Green Charcoal Hydrogen (GCH) Fuel for restaurants, 3) control mango, vegetable and rice pests per BPI Licenses and MOAs, 4) supply Activated and Bio-activated Carbon and three types of Bio-enzymes, 5) control Dengue throughout any Barangay or City, 6) conduct free seminars, or 7) offer jobs, joint ventures and other business opportunities, including networking for three MAPECON packages - a) pest control, b) anti-pollution, and c) CAR-UP Package for motorists to enjoy outdoor cooking with surefire protection against pests and pollution. MAPECON IS SAFER, and it gives the Filipino consumers at least 100-peso savings per liter as compared to the foreign ready-to-use pesticides in the market (a MAPECON catalog can be had for free or for only Php 20 if mailed through the Post Office.)

And last, but above all, we at MAPECON are praising the Almighty for always guiding MAPECON to the right directions, for more than 42 years now. (MAPECON has, in fact, SEC-registered Jesus Christ as the corporation's "President.")

Thank you all very much.

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DILG shoots down firemen's request for firearms

By Tina Santos

STICK with your hoses and shoot water instead of bullets.

That was the message of the Department of Interior and Local Government to firemen yesterday as it turned down a request to allow firefighters to carry firearms while responding to fires.

"There is no way the agency could grant their (firefighters) request," said Marius Corpus, DILG undersecretary for peace and order, who has jurisdiction over the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP).

In a phone interview, Corpus instead said that they would just implement the provisions of a Memorandum of Agreement inked between the Philippine National Police and the BFP which requires lawmen to protect firemen.

Corpus said the MOA had long been in existence but had not been implemented.

"We'll follow it up and see to it that this time it is enforced to protect firefighters getting into trouble with fire victims," he said.

Caloocan BFP director Chief Insp. Agapito Nacario earlier sought the formation of an armed unit of firefighters to escort fellow firemen.

Nacario issued the request after at least four firefighters were mauled last month during a fire that razed a residential community in Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City.

The residents scrambled for the water hoses because they wanted their houses to be hosed with water first. When the firemen resisted, the residents ganged up on them.

Under the proposal, the unit of armed firemen would assist other firefighters, including volunteers, during operations. The unit would also secure the trucks and equipment.

But Corpus emphasized that firefighters were not trained to handle peace-keeping problems.

"They're not trained to handle firearms, their duty is firefighting," Corpus stressed adding that the proposal could be "dangerous."

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte also opposed arming firemen, stressing that firefighters should concentrate on their job, adding that he saw no need to arm firefighters.

"I'm against the idea (arming of firefighters). They would just have to leave it (providing security) to the police, they better concentrate their efforts (on putting out fires)," Belmonte said.

No bonus for tardy WPD cops

By Tarra Quismundo

BE FAIR.

Such is the appeal of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association Inc. (MFBAI) after more than 200 members of the Western Police District were not given their year-end bonus due to administrative offenses that included being late for work.

"A policeman who reported late for work suffers as much as one who has been suspended," said SPO4 Edilberto Capacete, MFBAI president.

But WPD comptroller Supt. Herminio Bucacao said the forfeiture of the bonus was meant to discipline lawmen.

"Some policemen do not take their offenses seriously. How would they be disciplined if this would not be done?" said Bucacao.

He added that the year-end pay was being given only to deserving policemen who had performed satisfactorily in their jobs.

Thus, he made no distinction between light or grave offenses.

Bucacao explained that the lawmen were being punished under a two-year-old directive from the PNP Office of Legal Service in Camp Crame.

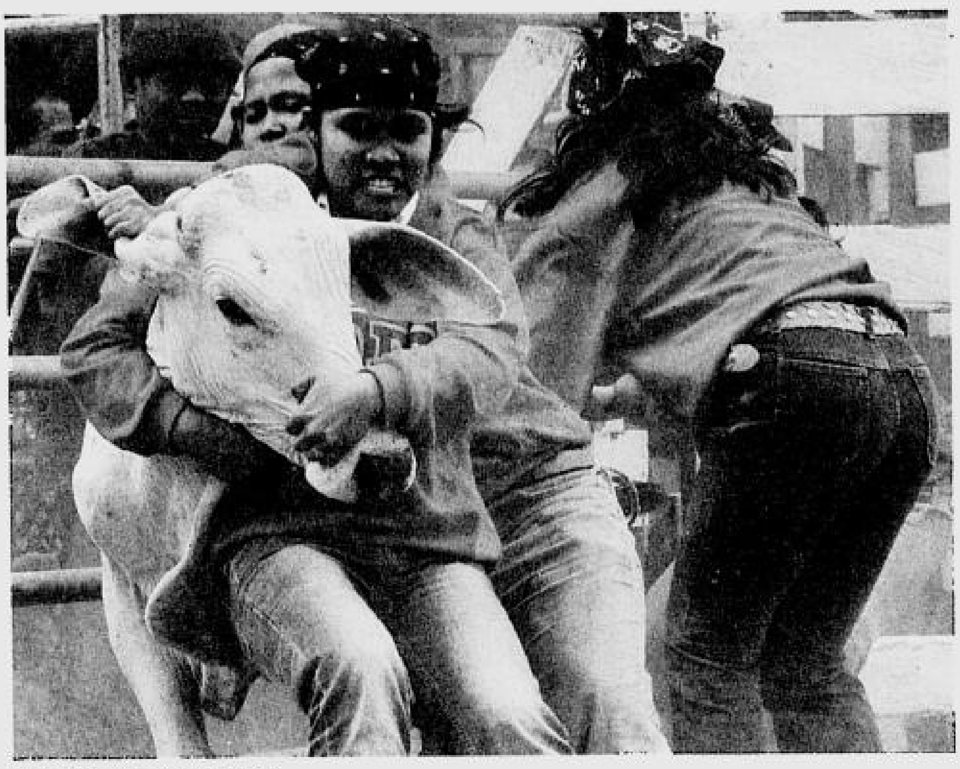
The directive orders the various police districts to withhold the bonus of policemen who have incurred administrative offenses, from simple neglect, absence, late arrival or failure to report to their detail, those absent without leave (AWOL), and those who have been suspended or dismissed.

The forfeiture of the year-end bonus is on top of the punishment already meted out on erring lawmen, who may have already been denied pay based on the gravity of their offense.

Thus on Nov. 30, when the checks for the Christmas bonus were distributed to WPD lawmen, around 200 police officers went home empty-handed.

Bucacao said that he had warned the policemen about the memorandum a long time ago but some of the men were "simply hard-headed."

He however added that affected policemen could still appeal their cases before the WPD headquarters, and once cleared, could still receive their cash incentives.



RODEO AT THE PARK
Women from the Central Luzon State University wrestle with a bull during the Scramble division of the National Rodeo Competition yesterday at the Rizal Park. ERIK ARAZAS

Manila dances to world music

By Tarra Quismundo

COLOR, music, cheers and applause filled the Bulwagang Antonio Villegas at the Manila City Hall yesterday morning, as dance troupes from Asia and Europe gave a sampling of their skills at the opening of the First Manila International Folk Dance Festival.

Delegations from China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Macau, Malaysia, Thailand, Spain, and Slovakia are in Manila for the four-day dance festival, dubbed Lawiswis, a Filipino adjective that refers to the "rustling and swaying of the leaves and stalks of the bamboo tree that evokes music and dance in their most elemental forms."

"This is an opportunity to promote culture, as the groups are portraying their lives through song and dance," said Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr., who welcomed the delegates yesterday.

The Bayanihan Foundation, the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the city government of Manila organized the dance exhibition which, Atienza said, would be a yearly event.

"This will become bigger in the future," said Atienza, who was once a member of world-renowned Bayanihan, the country's national dance company.

The delegates will perform at the Plaza Rajah Sulayman on Dec. 6, and at the CCP's Bulwagang Aurelio Tolentino on Dec. 7.

Abducted girl finds way home

By Luige del Puerto

HOME at last.

After almost a week of wandering the streets of Manila, a 4-year-old girl finally made it back home in Marikina City Tuesday night, the police announced yesterday.

The girl had an emotional reunion with her mother, who last saw her child on Nov. 27, the day a neighbor took her away from their home in Labanos Street, Barangay Malanday, Marikina City, according to city police chief Sr. Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr.

The girl was rescued after she was sighted on a sidewalk in Intramuros, Rojas said.

Rojas said they received a call from a concerned citizen who said she saw a girl who fitted the description of the missing child near the cathedral.

Rojas said members of the Women and Children Concerned Unit immediately coordinated with the Western Police District and checked the area.

The police found the girl and her alleged abductor, Nancy Palma, 32, of Bulelak Street, Barangay Malanday, at about 8 p.m.

Palma denied abducting her neighbor's daughter.

She said she took the child because she missed her own daughter, who is with her estranged husband.

Palma faces kidnapping charges.

PNP revamp and GMA's image

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

MALACANANG'S putting on hold the wide-ranging revamp within the Philippine National Police (PNP) is a bad reflection on President Macapagal-Arroyo's leadership.

It means that the President was not consulted before the revamp order was issued, that's why she had to freeze it after she learned about it.

What does this mean? That GMA is not in control at the PNP.

* * *

GMA had better crack her whip at her subordinates so they would know who's the Big Boss.

If she can't control her subordinates, how can she relay to the citizenry that she can lick the problems of kidnapping and bank robbery?

The problem with GMA is she's too soft on her subalterns.

* * *

I went through the list of PNP officials affected by the revamp and those given key positions. Almost all of them are graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

There goes the PMA clique again in the parceling out of key positions. Aren't there non-PMAers who are qualified for those positions?

The PNP Officers Corps is composed of 94 percent non-PMAers. Only six percent are products of the PMA. How come the minority rules over the majority?

* * *

How unfair is the current PNP revamp to the non-PMAers?

An example is Chief Supt. Marcelo Ele Jr., who was unceremoniously yanked out as acting chief at the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM). Ele was replaced by a PMAer. He's now chief of the PNP Legal Service, considered a "freezer" among line officers.

Ele is an integree, meaning he entered the service—then the paramilitary Philippine Constabulary (PC)—through the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).

Ele is also a helicopter pilot, lawyer (most of his fellow officers are not), and recipient of many government awards. Several years ago, he received the Civil Service Commission's Dangal ng Bayan Award, the highest award bestowed on a government official or employee.

Before he was placed at the DIDM, Ele went the rounds of assignments from town police chief, provincial director, to director of the Aviation Security Group.

Now, tell me which PMAer can match Ele's record.

* * *

Demoralization among officers who are non-PMAers now runs high at the PNP as a result of the current revamp.

Non-PMA officers will soon issue a manifesto pouring out their hard feelings over the revamp.

The President had better listen to these officers because they comprise the majority of the PNP Officers Corps.

* * *

The government has threatened to withdraw from the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) because the rebel group keeps on coddling Muslim terrorists.

No less than the President herself issued the ultimatum. She said that the government would continue to go after terrorists even if it meant scuttling the peace talks with the MILF.

It's a good thing that the government has come to its senses.

* * *

The government has been pacifying the Moros so much they perceive it as weakness.

It has given the Muslims more privileges than Christian citizens.

For example, the government has made the end of the month-long Ramadan or fasting as a holiday. Which predominantly Christian country in the world does that?

Do Muslim countries with minority Christian populations make special days of Christmas or Easter Sunday?

* * *

Hussin Faisal was recently appointed chief of the intelligence division at the Bureau of Immigration by Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong, a fellow Muslim.

No sooner has the ink on his appointment papers dried up when Faisal started rounding up Chinese merchants in Baclaran, Quiapo and Divisoria.

Faisal didn't even defer to Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo. Domingo never gave him orders to arrest illegal Chinese merchants.

Talks are that money changes hands between Faisal's men and Chinese merchants for their release.

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FOUR DIGIT
9 1 3 9
(In exact order)

SUERTRES
6 8 5

MEGALOTTO 6/45
5 7 19 23 34 45

Checkpoint pays off: 6 car thieves tagged, slain

By Leila B. Salaverria

ONE OF the checkpoints ordered set up by President Macapagal-Arroyo to counter rising criminality proved its worth after six suspected car thieves were tagged and slain by the police in Manila yesterday.

SP04 Eduardo Villanueva, of the Western Police District Anti-Carnapping Unit, said he and his team were manning a checkpoint along Singalong street when they spotted a maroon Besta van with no license plate at about 3 p.m.

They tried to flag it down but it sped off instead.

Suspicious, the police followed the vehicle as they radioed the Special Weapons and Tactics (Swat) team for back up.

Shootout

Upon reaching the President Sergio Osmeña Sr. Highway (formerly the South Super Highway), the lawmen decided to cut the van's path.

Suddenly, the occupants of the van and that of a white Tamaraw FX (PVF 777) which was following it opened fire at the police. A shootout then erupted.

The gun battle intensified after the SWAT team arrived.

After the smoke cleared, six suspects lay bloodied inside the two vehicles, three in each van.

They were all rushed to the Ospital ng Maynila but were later pronounced dead on arrival.

At presstime, the identities of only two of the six men had been confirmed. They were Senando Lanno, a retired member of the Armed Forces and Romeo delos Santos.

Investigators were still trying to confirm the identities of the four others, although they found several identification cards inside the suspects' vehicles bearing the names P01 Sherwin Esguerra, RAM member Edger Bermudo, Edwin Galang and Teodulo Abanador.

Arms cache

The police recovered an M16 rifle, a 9 mm pistol, a .45-caliber pistol and a hand grenade inside the maroon van. Inside the FX were found two .45-caliber pistols.

Scene of the crime operatives also found a set of license plates (XDL 469) inside the maroon van.

Ancar operatives later said that the plate number belonged to the Besta van which was reported stolen in Malate on Monday.

A sketch of the Paco area centering on the PNB and UCPB branches were found inside the suspects' vehicles along with black bonnets and duck tapes, prompting police to say the suspects had planned to rob a bank.

QC robbery spooks CPD

By Tina Santos

THE CENTRAL Police District nearly panicked over reports that armed men attempted to snatch two Filipino-Chinese women yesterday morning in Quezon City.

However, this was immediately downplayed by policemen, saying what happened at about 8 a.m. in La Loma was a mere robbery.

"What happened was not an attempted kidnapping but merely a robbery… the story was blown out of proportion," said a CPD official, who refused to be identified.

One of the victims, Jarosadin King-Cajigal, 27, a bank clerk, told investigators that one of the three suspects grabbed her bag containing P30,000 cash and three cell phones, pass book and credit cards.

Police reports said Cajigal and her younger sister, Dulce, were about to leave for work at 8:15 a.m. when the suspects struck in front of their house on Tabayok Street, Barangay Sienna, La Loma.

The younger Cajingal fought with the suspects allowing her sister to break loose.

The commotion alerted neighbors, prompting the armed men to back off and speed off in a silver-gray Honda Civic (WJE 474).

"The incident was immediately reported by the victims to our office. Manhunt operations are now under way against the suspects," the police officer said.

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EDWIN BACASMAS

ROY Cañete Jr. gives teammate Sherwin Dela Paz (2) a high five after the match.

SEA GAMES

Water polo bets shine; archers fail

HANOI—The Philippines blasted Malaysia, 12-5, yesterday and boosted its medal drive in the water polo competition even as the Filipina archers failed to gain ground two days before the 22nd Southeast Asian Games officially gets under way here.

Roy Cañete, a 21-year-old Airman First Class, knocked in four goals to lead the Filipinos to their second straight win after a heartbreaking 6-7 setback at the hands of reigning SEAG champion Singapore in their debut last Monday.

Cañete got ample support from Michael Jorolan, Almax Laurel and

WATER/ A22

GMA invited to PSA awards night

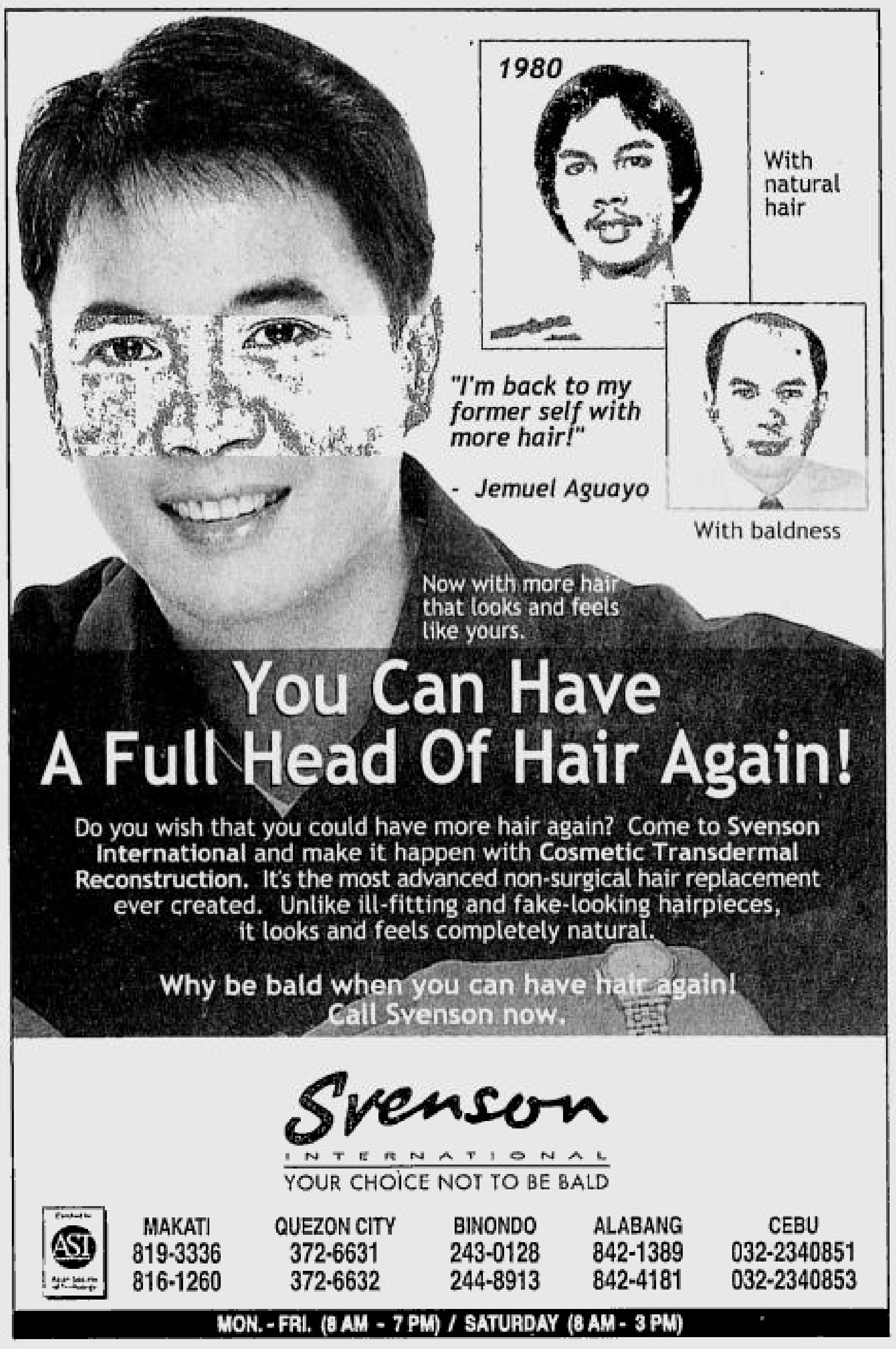
MACAPAGAL

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has been invited to be the guest of honor and speaker during the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Annual Awards set Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavillion.

PSA president Roberto D. Cuevas, sports editor of the Manila Standard, said the PSA board had unanimously endorsed the letter of invitation to the President, who is expected to grace the occasion to confer the highest honors to the top athletes and other achievers in sports in 2003.

This will be the second time the President will attend the formal rites of the country's oldest organization, which gives recognition

GMA/ A23



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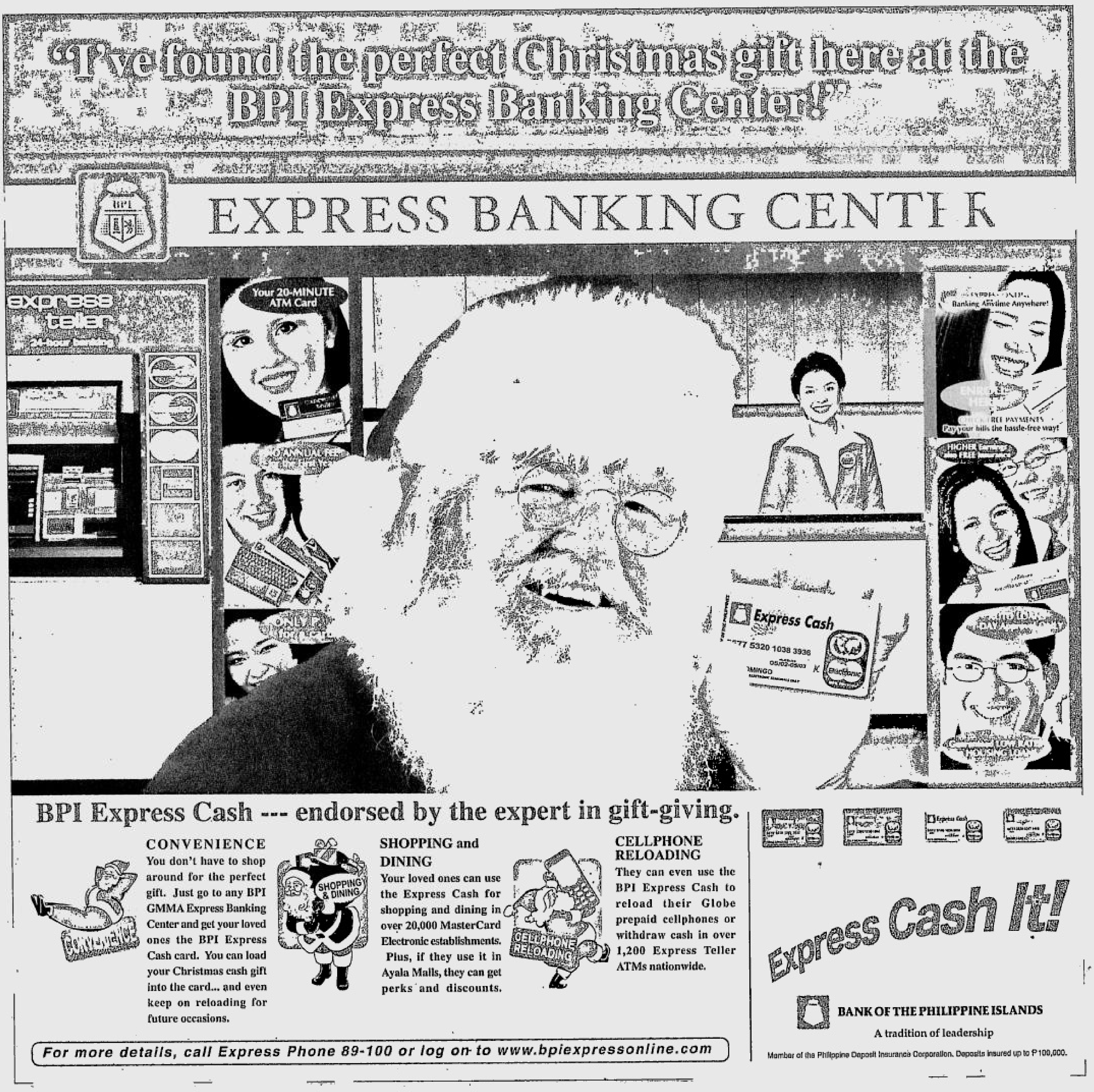
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JOEY Mente of San Miguel drives off Ato Morano of Coca-Cola in their game last night. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Grachiya turns back Sulpicio five

GAME TOMORROW
(Gov. Angel Medina Gym, Ozamiz)
5 p.m.—Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu vs Pampanga

GRACHIYA-Adamson held off a fierce rally by Sulpicio-Pampanga in the homestretch to escape with a 77-75 victory Tuesday in the 2003 Panasonic-National Basketball League Regional Cup tournament at the Adamson gym.

Patrick Cabahug scored 17 points, including five of eight from the three-point area, to give the Grachiya Falcons their second win in seven starts.

With the win, the Falcons moved up to sixth spot and earned a shot at Compak/Shineway-Ozamiz, which has a twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals.

Sulpicio-Pampanga, now in seventh with a 1-4 card, faces unbeaten M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu tomorrow at the Gov. Angel Medina gym in Ozamiz City in the tournament sponsored by Panasonic Phils., Beer na Beer, Sulpicio Lines, Nature's Spring Mineral Water, BJ Start Logistics and Molten Basketball.

Despite playing with only five men, the Pampangos proved to be a tough nut to crack, even leading 36-35 at halftime.

The Falcons rallied to seize the lead, 57-54, going into the final quarter. They then pulled away, 75-65, with three minutes left.

But Sulpicio-Pampanga banked on the sallies of Cesar Pile and Loreto Tolentino to threaten at 75-77. That turned out to be the Pampangos' final stand, as Steve Marucot's basket failed to beat the buzzer.

Scores:

GRACHIYA-AU 77—Cabahug 17, Tiongco 14, Abadia 11, Tagupa 7, Hate 6, Bono 6, Alonzo 4, Gandarosa 4, Capati 4, Hugnatan 2, Poloyapoy 2, Catabay 0, Tajonera 0.

PAMPANGA 75—Marucot 25, Pile 17, Gomez 15, Tolentino 13, Pua 5.

Quarters: 12-13, 35-36, 57-54, 77-75

Alvarez joins PBA draft

ATENEO power forward Rich Alvarez became the first big name to cast his lot in a potentially rich Philippine Basketball Association draft pool next season.

Alvarez bagged two Most Valuable Player Awards and a UAAP championship in a decorated collegiate career and is expected to be at the top of the shopping list of teams in need of size and muscle at the frontline.

The 6-4 forward, also a member of the RP team, is just one of several college stars that should fill the first few places in the draft proceedings.

Two other standouts from the college ranks have applied for the draft—UE guard Arnold Booker and La Salle slotman Carlo Sharma.

Other early entrants include US-based college players Joaquin Hawkins (6-2) and Arvin Garcia (6-4).

Deadline for the submission of applications is Dec. 29.

Tigers clinic in Dagupan

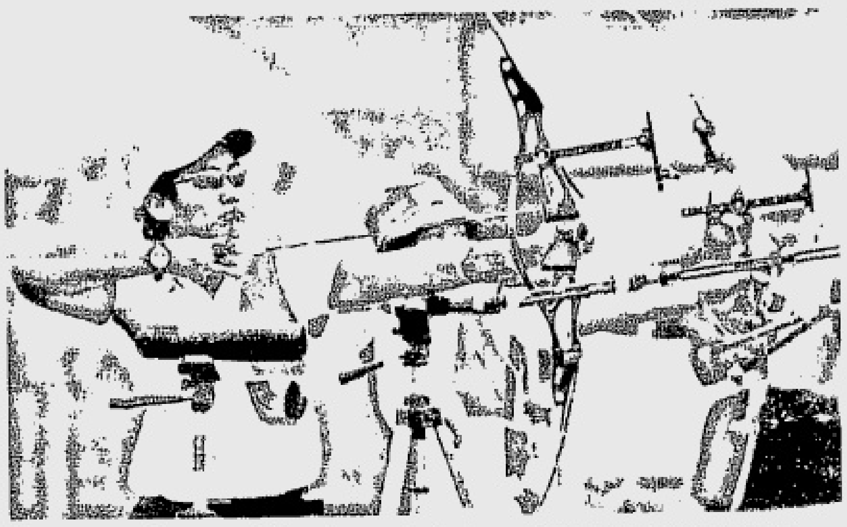
COACH Chot Reyes, his staff and the Coca-Cola Tigers held a well-attended Coca-Cola Champions Basketball Clinic recently at the Lyceum Northwestern University gym.

Some 200 students in Dagupan took part in the intensive tutorial on the basics of basketball.

The Tigers gave the students personalized on-court mentoring on ball-handling, moves, rebounding, post defense and mechanics, shooting and perimeter defense.

Water polo bets shine; archers fail

RP flag raised today



CHAN aims at her target during the quarterfinal round in Hanoi's National Sports Training Center No. 1. She failed to advance to the medal round. EDWIN BACASMAS

From page A21

Frazer Alamara, who netted two goals each.

The Filipinos resume their bid at the National Aquatics Sports Comeplex when they face Indonesia, third-placer in the 2001 Kuala Lumpur Games, at 12:30 p.m. today, needing a victory to assure themselves of a medal.

But while the water polo team shone, the Filipina archers faltered in their bid to land at least a medal in the individual competitions.

Jennifer Chan and youthful Jasmin Figueroa bowed to their respective champion rivals, while Rachelle Anne Cabral failed to reach the semifinals following a costly miscue.

"We have a good chance of getting a medal this time," said water polo head Leo Galang. "The boys are in high spirits. They're out to make up for their disappointing fifth-place finish in Kuala Lumpur two years ago."

Singapore rolled to its third win yesterday by crushing host Vietnam, 22-7. Thailand downed Indonesia, 7-5, in the other match.

The Filipinos face the Thai in their final match tomorrow.

"We will apply the same strategy we used in our first three games," said Galang. "We will press the Indons from start to finish."

Galang praised his boys for their solid performance. "(Jose) Tolentino was a stonewall in defense, while Joel Villa and Dale Evangelista contributed a goal each," said Galang.

The Philippines landed second in 1993 (in Singapore) and 1999 (in Brunei) for its best finish in the SEA Games water polo competition.

Over at the National Sports Training Center I, Chan lost to Malaysia's Fairuz Ibrahim, 103-99, while Figueroa was pipped by Indonesia's Rina Dewi Puspita, 100-99, in the Olympic Round quarterfinals.

22ND SEA GAMES
VIET NAM
2003

Cabral, needing only six points to advance, lost her composure in her round-of-16 showdown with Fairuz as she lost her grip on her arrow while still trying to take aim, giving her a zero and enabling the Malaysian to score a 158-53 victory.

"Sorry, sorry," the 18-year-old Cabral told Chan. "*Dapat tayo ang nagkalaban sa quarterfinals* (We should have faced each other in the quarterfinals)."

The losses left the Philippines pinning its hopes on its male archers when they vie in the individual Olympic Round bracket today. The Filipinas hope to bounce back in the team competitions tomorrow.

The Philippines' presence in the Games becomes official today when its flag is raised together with those of 10 other participating countries at the National Stadium.

The ceremony, which will also be attended by athletes and officials from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor and host Vietnam, starts at 9 a.m.

Julian Camacho, chef de mission of the 600-strong RP contingent, will attend the flag-raising activity together with other officials and at least 25 athletes. Sports Commissioner Leon Montemayor will represent Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain.

Minister Nguyen Danh Thai, chair of the organizing committee, will welcome the delegations.

The Philippines is seeing action in 28 of 32 events to be held in the cities of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and Haishung.

These events are aquatics (swimming, diving and water polo), archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, billiards and snooker, bodybuilding, boxing, canoeing, chess, cycling, fencing, women's football, gymnastics, judo, karatedo, pencak silat, rowing, sepak takraw, shooting, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, traditional boat race, volleyball, weightlifting, wrestling and wushu.

Filipino entries open their campaign in two more events today—rowing and gymnastics.

Rowing president and Philippine Olympic Committe treasurer Benjamin Ramos expects his wards to improve their 3-silver, 2-bronze output in Kuala Lumpur.

Viva-FEU tries to stay alive vs Sunkist

FIRST Conference runner-up Viva Mineral Water-FEU battles Sunkist-UST today with both teams trying to stay in contention for the semifinals of the 2003 PBL Platinum Cup at the UST Gym.

The Water Force are expected to go all-out against the only team they beat in the first round, and coach Koy Banal is hoping they can repeat that feat again.

The Tigers are also in a bind and need to play more resolutely as a team if they want to avenge their 66-77 defeat to Viva two weeks ago.

The Tigers (3-4) and Water Force (1-5) clash at 4 p.m. in a game featuring Viva's vaunted running game against Sunkist-UST's well-calculated half-court offense.

One thing going for the Tigers is that they have remained perfect at their own den. They beat ICTSI-La Salle, 62-61, behind Alex Compton and Fash Liquid Detergent, 69-63, at the UST venue.

STANDINGS	W	L
Melcoat	6	1
Montana	4	2
Fash Liquid	4	3
Blustar	3	3
Sunkist-UST	3	4
ICTSI	2	5
VIVA-FEU	1	5

GAMES TODAY
(UST Gym)
1:45 p.m.—Blustar vs ICTSI
4:00 p.m.—Viva-FEU vs Sunkist-UST

Battling in the curtain raiser at 1:45 p.m. are BluStar and ICTSI.

The Detergent Kings, toting an even 3-3 card, are again favored to prevail over the Archers (2-4).

BluStar beat ICTSI in overtime, 85-80, in the first round.

Expected to carry the scoring load for the Detergent Kings are Lou Gatombato, Jenkins Mesina and Ismael Junio while ICTSI coach Franz Pumaren will again rely on Joseph Yeo, Dino Aldeguer and Mac Cardona.

Crucial for the Archers' semifinal bid is the performance of 5-foot-11 Yeo, who was a big letdown in the team's 51-72 loss to Welcoat last Sunday. Yeo was held to just four points—his lowest output so far in the tournament.

The Water Force have been into this kind of situation in the first conference. They lost their first four games but went on to clinch the last semis berth with a string of wins.

"I just hope we can re-enact that feat," said Banal. "We'll go out and play our hearts out to win at least five games. It's a tall order but we will try our best."

Filipino workers cheer RP cagers

By Roy Luarca

HO CHI MINH City, Vietnam—Filipino cagers did their first workout Wednesday and got a pleasant surprise when hundreds of overseas Filipino workers showed up at the Military Gymnasium House here.

"The Filipino community here will be in full force," said Jun Carlos, self-appointed head of the delegation. "We'll root for them all the way to show a united Filipino spirit."

Elated by this development, RP-Cebuana Lhuillier head coach Aric del Rosario said: "We are going for a good start. The boys are in high spirits after seeing the Thais limber up Tuesday. *Kayang kaya* (They're beatable)."

The Filipinos meet the Thais at 8:30 p.m. (9:30 p.m. in Manila) on Sunday, following the 6:30 p.m. tussle between the Filipina cagebelles and their Thai counterparts.

Basketball action actually starts Saturday with a triple-bill featuring Singapore versus Indonesia in both the men's and women's brackets at 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. and Vietnam against Malaysia (men) at 8:30 p.m. following the 7 p.m. inaugural ceremonies.

FAVORITES: THE RP-Cebuana Lhuillier team with head coach Del Rosario (eighth from left).

Helping Del Rosario conduct the drills were Boyzie Zamar and Dong Vergeire, both of whom boast Southeast Asian Games basketball titles.

Zamar steered a selection of stars from the defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association to the 2001 Kuala Lumpur SEAG crown, while Vergeire piloted a Romel Adducul- and Danny Ildefonso-led team to the 1997 Jakarta SEAG title.

RP-Cebuana Lhuillier is built around young, tall stalwarts of the Philippine Basketball League.

Reinforcing the team, which placed a lowly 15th in the last ABC Championships in Harbin, China, are 6-foot-7 Ervin Sotto and 6-6 Ranidel de Ocampo, both of St. Francis of Assisi; 6-4 Rich Alvarez and 6-4 Wesley Gonzales, both of Ateneo; 6-3 James Yap of UE and 6-5 Allan Salangsang of Fash Dishwashing Liquid.

Returning are 6-1 Richie Melencio, 6-6 Marc Pingris, 6-5 Recaredo Calimag, PBL MVP 6-2 Gary David, 5-8 Celino Cruz and 5-10 Dennis Madrid.

Jaguars catch PMI cagers in the lead

STANDINGS: Group A—St. Francis 4-1; CDSI, 4-1; SSC-R 4-1; EAC 3-2; Amacu 0-2; La Salle-Dasmariñas 0-3; CCM 1-2; Amacc 0-4. **Group B**—PSBA 5-0; Rizal Tech 4-1; Lyceum 2-3; PUP 2-2; St. Benedict 2-2; NCBA 2-3; New Era 1-4; La Salle-Manila 1-5; Olivarez College 0-4.

PHILIPPINE School of Business Administration drew 81 points from its four top guns to outplay St. Benedict College, 115-96, Tuesday and join Philippine Maritime Institute at the top of the standings in the National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) basketball tournament at the RTU gym.

Romer Diaz hit 27 points, Jonathan Tarronas shot 22 and Al Federiso and Ronnie Zagala contributed 17 and 15, respectively, as the Jaguars posted their fifth straight win in Group B.

Not to be outdone, the Colegio de San Lorenzo Griffins walloped AMA Computer College, 91-62, to stay abreast with co-leaders St. Francis of Assisi and San Sebastian College of Cavite in Group A.

The Jaguars kept up with PMI in the top spot after PSBA won by forfeiture over the National College of Business Arts Wildcats.

Nizar Kiram topscored for the Doves with 14 points as they whipped City Colleges of Manila, 88-52.

Ronjay Buenafe hit 9 points, including nine in the last 4:19 to lead the Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals past PATTS, 64-60. The Generals trail the Griffins, the Doves and Baycats at 3-2.

Mizuno-DHL teams ablaze in Fil-Am

By Al S. Mendoza

BAGUIO CITY—Mizuno-DHL grabbed the spotlight in team play yesterday of both premier divisions, but four men inserted some drama by scoring hole-in-one feats in the second round of the 54th Fil-Am Golf Invitational.

Hawaiian Jimmy Nakamura, Guam's Virgilio Biscocho and Filipinos Floyd dela Cruz and Eddie Jose scored aces on different holes to join Inocencio Laranang, Monday's ace maker from Sustagen Premium II, in the hole-in-one club.

Nakamura of Hui'o, Hawaii, scored his ace at Camp John Hay's par 3 15th, Jose of BMG Solar at CJH's No. 6, Dela Cruz of Isabela GC at Baguio Country Club's par-3 10th and Biscocho of PAGA Guam at No.12 of BCC.

"There goes the hole-in-one plane tickets getting raffled off," said BCC's Nanette Filler, the Fil-Am's "Iron Butterfly" for her efforts at helping ensure the tournament's success.

Round-trip tickets to Paris and London from Eva Air will be raffled off among those scoring a hole-in-one on both courses on Saturday night in the event presented by Smart Communications and sponsored by Northwest Airlines and Royal Caribbean International.

But Mizuno-DHL cannot be denied of the day's biggest honors. In a rare display of explosive start in the world's biggest golf tournament, Mizuno-DHL shoved perennial champion CAP-Southwoods out of the scene in both the Fil and Am Division championships.

Mizuno-DHL posted 128 points at the trickier, 4,038-yard par-61 BCC to go five up over defending champion CAP-Southwoods (123) in the Fil Division.

"The secret of our success today was the bonding the boys had developed, although we formed the team only recently," said Lovell Gopez, the Mizuno-DHL skipper. "Tomorrow, I'll tell the boys to just play their usual game to ease the pressure of carrying the leadership."

Mizuno-DHL also led CAP-Southwoods, the runnerup last year, in the Am Division Championship, 138-134.

"You have to give it to them (Mizuno-DHL)," said CAP-Southwoods team captain Thirdy Escano. "I'll tell my boys to keep close to them tomorrow as the fight really is usually won here at the Country Club."

Scoring big for Mizuno-DHL in the Fil Division were Paul Miñoza and Marvin Dumandan with 34 points apiece at BCC.

Erwin Vinluan, the former CAP-Southwoods mainstay, had 33 and Romeo Jaraula and Tristan Tabanas had 27s.

CAP-Southwoods' top scorer was national champion Jerome Delariarte with 35, followed by Gene Bondoc with 31, Mark Lopez 30 and Artemio Murakami 27.

Over at John Hay, Mizuno-DHL's Lawrence Negrido had a tournament-best 3-under-par 66 worth 39 points.

Jimmy Feliciano, Greg Laguatan and Rudy Amata backed him with 33s.

SPORTSWATCH

Aguilar takes Asian Supercross crown

AGUILAR: Big victory

CALTEX-REVTEX star rider Glenn Aguilar formalized his victory in the FIM Asian Supercross, the continent's most prestigious motocross title, with a tactical ride in the final leg at the Yigo International Raceway Park in Guam. Aguilar, representing the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association, headed by Ken Falco, clinched FIM's Asia-Pacific 125cc over Aep Dadang of Indonesia. The Filipino bucked a spill in the qualifying 125cc race and still placed second behind Australian rider Jye Harvey. He finished third to Harvey and Hawaii's Bronson Hethcote in the finals. In both races, Aguilar posted the best lap times. At the end of the race, Aguilar took the Philippine flag on display near the podium and waved it around the race track in his victory ride. "I am glad to be the first Filipino to win the much-coveted Asian motocross championship," he said. Coupled with Kenneth San Andres' stunning division triumph in the final leg, the Philippines also snared the Coupe Des Nations Asiatique 2003, the coveted prize awarded to the country with the best overall performance. "You don't get to see every day a Filipino dominating Asian motocross the way Glenn did," said Revtex team manager Ner Marquez Dormiendo, who accompanied the riders to the Guam meet, together with lubricants manager Paul Familara and UAM president Macky Carapiet.

Laguna, NCR lead Luzon football tilt

LAGUNA and powerhouse National Capital Region show the way in the Men's Open after the weekend matches in the Luzon Regional Football Championship in Los Baños, Laguna. The host province defeated Tarlac, 5-2, Baguio bounced back to beat Rizal, 4-0, and NCR—represented by Globe Super Cup leader Air Force—routed Oriental Mindoro, 12-0. Laguna, runner-up in the Adidas U-19 in Iloilo last October, also pulled off a 4-3 decision over Oriental Mindoro, which fielded in the president of the province's football association, Jay Adriatico. Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro and newly elected PFF president Johnny Romualdez officiated the tournament's opening rites. Earlier, Tarlac beat Rizal, 4-2, and NCR demolished Baguio, 13-2.

DOT backs Speedo-Asian aquathlon

THE SPEEDO-Asian Aquathlon Championships and the 2nd Boracay Multisports Festival set Dec. 11 to 13 in Boracay got a big boost with the endorsement from the Department of Tourism. The last major event in this year's calendar of events of the Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRAP), the three-day international aquathlon was officially endorsed by Sports Tourism Director Cynthia Carrion, who has been tasked to promote the Philippines as a major sports and tourism destination in Asia. "This is the kind of event that showcases the country's natural attractions like Boracay as a sports destination. At the same time it shows the Filipinos' capability for organizing major international sports events like the Speedo-Asian Aquathlon Championships," Carrion said. Foreign entries from Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea as well as tourists have confirmed their participation in the event co-sponsored by the Pearl of the Pacific, Nike, Fuji Film, Gatorade, Corporate Air, David's Salon/Spa, PSC, MobileMedia, Mirror Magazine, and Powerbar.

Roligon 5-cocker resumes Saturday

THE SECOND batch of more than 100 entries plunges into action in Roligon Mega Cockpit's "Apordabol Na, Incredibol Pa 5-Cock Derby" this Saturday. Submission of weights is set tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Interested parties may call 833-2275 and 833-1638. To be hosted by popular promoter Rolly Ligon, the four-day event (Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 11 and 13) dangles a cash prize of P2.25 million and an imported Nissan Serena. Fifteen cockers tallied two points each in the first round on Nov. 29. They were Alex Tan (Dwight), Henry and Gerry (HJ Group Lucky Molino), Dr. Jovy (R and R), Rey Briones (Tata Rewy II), Tiling Apitan (H Birthday Lady 121), Marcel Julao (MTJ Bros), Levi Panlilio (Ralph), Mr. Keiruz (RK), Ronnel Tañada (HTS), Meder Datu (Meroda), Renato Shio (Magnificent), Honey Yu (Princess Bernice), Sanel Gudaka (Sanel), Nono San Pablo (Maliitan Lang 1-Cock La Loma) and Gene Avendano (Scaramouche II). The hackfights will start at 10 a.m. tomorrow, according to pit manager Renato Shio. A bonus of P1,000 per winner will be given until 1 p.m.

JOHNNY Arcilla, proving his stature as the country's top tennis player, won all four singles titles in the just-ended Cebuana Lhuillier Tennis Circuit. The 23-year-old Arcilla bested 11 of the country's leading players during the Masters Cup, the circuit's culminating leg. Arcilla receives his Masters Cup trophy and cash prize from Jean Henri Lhuillier (third from left). With them are Philta vice president Ajay Pathak (left) and Lhuillier marketing manager April Escalona (right).

BERARDELLI CHAMPS: LS Dasma won the Fellowship Class crown in the recent 2003 Bro. Dominic Berardelli Cup La Salle Alumni basketball league at La Salle Greenhills gym by defeating Covenant. Standing from left to right: Tonito Gonzales, Rean Villasor, Mikey de Guzman, Francisco Gonzales, Momon Gonzales, BJ Afable, Wacky Garcia, Ton Abad, Eric Afable, Fred Martelino, Lew Dabao, Jaime Salas and Marco dela Concepcion. Kneeling, same order: Joel Yu, Midas Marquez, Larry Lebron, Nandy Padua, Noli Legarda, Joseph Yu and Boogie Javier.

Titleist-Footjoy Shootout today at Royale Tagaytay

CAMPAIGNERS in the Sta. Lucia Golf Tour 2003 warm up for the final showdown as they compete in the Titleist-Footjoy Shootout today at the tricky 9-hole course of the Royale Tagaytay Country Club.

Players from the six clubs competing in the Sta. Lucia Tour will vie for prizes from the sponsoring Titleist, Footjoy, Cobra and Pinnacle, distributed here by Dynamic Sports Corporation, in a skills challenge.

All holes of Royale Tagaytay will have contests using clubs, from putter to wedges and short irons. A separate contest will be held at the practice green for an 18-hole putting contest and at the driving range.

The best three players in each contest will qualify for the grand raffle during the awards rites.

There are 240 players on the roster who are set to see action in the final stage of the nationwide series for clubs flying the Sta. Lucia Realty banner tomorrow and Saturday.

The newly opened Norman course of Eagle Ridge will host the third leg tomorrow, Dec. 5, before the Tour winds up at the world-famous Palmer course of the Orchard on Saturday, Dec. 6.

ASIAN S'BALL CHAMP

Japan repeats over RP

By Dennis U. Eroa

JAPAN head coach Hidetomi Ikawa gets a victory lift. JESS YUSON

DEFENDING champion Japan overpowered the Philippines, 3-0, to rule the 7th Asian Softball Championship yesterday before a crowd never seen in years at the Rizal Memorial Ballpark.

LINESCORES								R	H	E
RP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Japan	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	1

The Japanese bats boomed loudest right in the first inning as they scored two runs, silencing the highly partisan crowd which came in full force hoping for a grand celebration.

"We gave it all, but Japan was too much for us," said coach Reynaldo "Baby" Manzanares.

This was the second straight time that the Blu Boys lost to the Japanese. They also bowed, 9-2, last Tuesday, but forced a rematch by blanking third placer Chinese-Taipei during a morning match also yesterday.

As if any consolation, the Philippines will join Japan and Chinese-Taipei in the World Softball Championship slated next January in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Manila Rep. Harry Angping, president of the Softball Association of the Philippines, also lauded the Blu Boys for their gallant stand.

"We learned a lot from this stint," said Angping, who like Manzanares thanked the fans for coming in droves to support the Blu Boys.

Some 2,000 elderly and young fans, including collegiate players and high schoolers, watched the match spiced with rock and roll music.

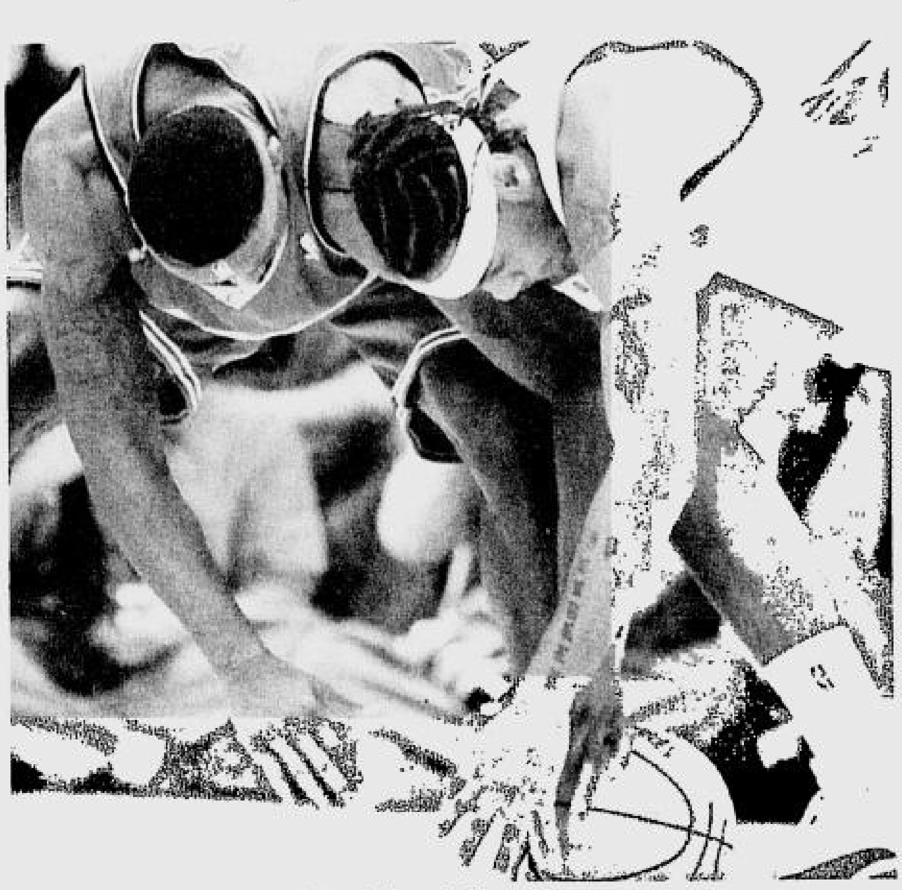
Airman Mark Rae Ramirez typified the Blu Boys determined stand as he actually limited the Japanese to just four with nine struck outs. He won as the tournament MVP.

With two outs in the 4th inning, Ramirez's deafening silence ensued in the stands as left fielder Makoto Yamanaka belted an inside the park homerun for a 3-0 lead.

Earlier, Yasu Okamoto opened the Japanese attack with a homerun off Ramirez's fastball which also sent teammate Shinichi Nagayoshi home for a 2-0 lead in the first.

"The Philippines played very well today but we held our ground," said Japan coach Hidetomi Ikawa.

Anthony stars as Nuggets subdue James, Cavs anew


JAMES (left) and Anthony battle for the loose ball in the first quarter. REUTERS

DENVER—LeBron vs Carmelo the sequel was better than the original. It still had the same ending.

Carmelo Anthony scored 20 of his 26 points in the second half Tuesday night, leading the Denver Nuggets to a 115-103 victory over LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Both players struggled in the first meeting, but showed glimpses of why there are the NBA's top two rookies in the second.

"We gave you all what you wanted to see for the last time we are going to play each other this year," said James, who finished with 19 points.

Anthony was just 1-for-5 in the first half, but was 7-of-11 in the second to help Denver to its sixth straight home win.

He added five rebounds and blocked four shots for the Nuggets (11-6), who have won eight of 10 overall and are off to their best start since 1989-90.

"I was letting the game come to me in the second half," said Anthony, who outscored James 14-7 in their first meeting. "I started out missing a couple of shots, but I stayed in the game and kept my head in it."

James had six rebounds and five assists, but forced several shots in the second half and finished 6-for-19 in Cleveland's seventh straight loss. The Cavaliers have lost 32 straight road games—0-11 this season—to tie the third-longest streak in league history. *AP*

GMA invited to PSA awards

From page A21

to Filipino sportsmen who won in international competitions in various sports.

President Arroyo was guest during the 2001 PSA Awards Night also at the Manila Pavilion.

The early candidates for the top award are boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, who defeated world featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera of Mexico, and kegler CJ Suarez, the fourth Filipino to win the prestigious World Cup of bowling.

The President herself led the nation in giving Pacquiao a hero's welcome on his arrival last week from the United States.

The Awards Night is sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors and backed by San Miguel Corporation, Philippine Basketball Association, Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corporation, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and sportsman Hermie Esguerra.

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Race 4--1. D' Minnows 2. Bold Lucky 3. Mirame 4. Lucky Strike

Race 5--1. Noor 2. Dynamic Jason 3. Loose Cannon 4. Fortius 5. Give and Take

Race 6--1. Perfect Gift 2. Exchange Deal 3. Pride of Mandaue 4. Words of Joy

Race 7--1. Sir Guguy 2. Western Legend 3. Time Deposit 4. Winning Streak 5. More Love

Race 8--1. Taller Cover 2. Spinning Bullet 3. Kaboom 4. Priceless Gem 5. Free Bee

Race 9--1. Silver Dollar 2. Formidable Ella 3. Lady Lawyer 4. Gimme A Ring 5. Mercurian 6. Golden Prince

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Fil-Am statistics

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

FOR the statistics conscious in golf, this is for you.

In the ongoing 54th Fil-Am Golf Invitational in Baguio City, 14 flights comprise the tournament field and equally divided into two. The Fil Division and Am Division each has the Championship Flight and Flights A, B, C, D, E and F.

The Fil Division's Championship Flight involves players with handicaps of 0-5, Flight A 6-8, Flight B 9-10, Flight C 11-12, Flight D 13-14, Flight E 15-17 and Flight F 18-31.

There are 32 players in Fil Division's Championship Flight, 53 in Flight A, 69 in Flight B, 61 in Flight C, 48 in Flight D, 65 in Flight E and 68 in Flight F for a total of 396.

The Am Division's Championship Flight has 26, Flight A 46, Flight B 70, Flight C 45, Flight D 63, Flight E 85 and Flight F 69 for a total of 404.

All in all, there are exactly 146 teams spread to 800 players, each one playing four rounds at the most over six days at Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay ending Dec. 6. A team is allowed seven players but only five is allowed to play for the day, with the best four scores counting using the Stableford System of scoring.

Such is the prestige of the Fil-Am that it has barged into the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's biggest amateur golf tournament, enticing players from as far as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Nine teams had been refused.

The enormity of the field requires that a supremely capable computer-backed crew of scorers be hired. That's where Joey Arguelles of the IPI (Information Professionals Inc.) comes in. Joey, who plays to a handicap 10, has his IPI once more as the Fil-Am's official scorer, a job it had done superbly the last two years.

It's not easy doing the job but to Joey's IPI, which also does information technology schemes and consultancy business, it makes things easy for the Fil-Am organizing committee headed by Anthony de Leon. The media covering the event are profuse in praising Joey's IPI.

I particularly admire IPI's efforts at establishing the hardest and easiest holes for the day.

For example, in Day 1, the hardest hole at Camp John Hay was the dogleg par-4 fifth, the so-called FVR hole, which recorded 142 pick-ups. The easiest was the par-3 sixth, which yielded 82 pars and 10 birdies, second only to the 12 birdies recorded at the par-4 eighth.

In Day 2, No. 5 remained the hardest at Camp John Hay, collecting 136 pick-ups and yielding only two birdies. The easiest was No. 8 (68 pick-ups, 76 pars and 9 birdies).

Over at Baguio Country Club, the hardest hole in both Day 1 and Day 2 was the par-4 11th. The hole with a towering pine tree in the middle of a fairway and a two-tiered, elevated green absorbed 323 pick-ups in two days, 163 in Day 2. The easiest in both days was the par 3 ninth, yielding 23 birdies for two days while collecting only 40 pick-ups each day.

Because golf is a game of mistakes, the number of bogeys far outnumbered the number of pars. There were 3,379 bogeys against 2,182 pars in two days at Baguio Country Club. At Camp John Hay, there were 2,862 bogeys against 1,805 pars.

Birdies? In two days, there were a total of 163 at Baguio Country Club, 180 at the par-69 Camp John Hay. Two eagles had been scored at Camp John Hay against one at Baguio Country Club. But the par 3-littered, par-61 Baguio Country Club (there's 11 par-3s there) yielded one hole-in-one already through Dr. Inoc Laranang (No. 13) on Monday.

I wish I could play in the Fil-Am someday, although I did join the Fil-Am Media Cup at Camp John Hay in 2001. That was memorable as golfing sportswriters from Manila battled their Baguio counterparts under an atmosphere of friendly competition. We won but, sorry, I don't have the statistics.

We couldn't afford Joey's asking fee for IPI.

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Alden Joshua Cedo, Graphics Design

100 live butterflies at New World's enchanted Christmas

An Enchanted Christmas!

THE NEW World Renaissance Hotel casts a magical spell on all merrymakers this holiday season with "An Enchanted Christmas". Delight in the deluxe hotel's spellbinding lobby display that includes: four Christmas Trees decked with colorful butterflies, sublime fairies, gold dust, and enchanting trimmings; 100 live butterflies in a teepee; Santa on a sleigh; a good-enough-to-eat Gingerbread House offering Christmas treats. To complete the exuberant holiday atmosphere, catch the 15-member Psalm Ensemble perform Christmas carols on December 16, 18, 20, 21 & 23 from 7 to 8 p.m.

On Christmas and New Year's Days, the hotel lobby becomes a bewitching children's wonderland from 12 noon to 2 p.m. with fun activities such as: an entertaining puppet show, an awesome bubble show, face painting, and enchanted games. A "Fairy of the Lobby" glides through giving out treats to all children.

The hotel's stylish restaurants beckon the entire family to celebrate the yuletide season. Creative continental resto Bocarinos offers an exquisite Christmas fete with its Holiday Chef's Table Set Menu on Dec. 24 for dinner at P1,200+. On Dec. 25, a Christmas Holiday Buffet is served for lunch at P990+. Fine Cantonese specialty restaurant Emperor Court presents an absolutely divine Christmas lunch and dinner buffet perfect for the festivities on Dec. 24 (dinner only) and Dec 25 at P950+. At the bustling Coffee Shop, savor well-loved traditional favorites in buffets for lunch and dinner on Dec. 24 (dinner only) and Dec. 25 at P890+. And at the Lobby Lounge, spend a casual Christmas celebration as it offers appetizing items offered in the menu for a light snack of full meal.

For New Year's festivities, the hotel food outlets outdo themselves by providing various offerings to choose from to celebrate the coming of 2004. A scrumptious Chef's Table Menu for dinner at Bocarinos is an elegant choice for New Year's Eve dinner at P1,500+. New Year's Day lunch is a lovely buffet of continental fare at P990+. A perfect feast to end the year is served at Emperor Court with a lunch and dinner buffet of Cantonese favorites for New Year's Eve dinner and New Year's Day lunch at P950+. A mouth-watering spread on New Year's Eve for dinner is prepared by the Coffee Shop at P890+. The Lobby Lounge's a la carte menu provides a varied choice for New Year's Eve dinner and New Year's Day lunch. Catch the exciting countdown on wide TV screens with live jazz entertainment and a champagne toast at midnight on Dec. 31. Half priced drinks are offered from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Of course, fun party favors and noise makers are included for a yearend bang.

For a thoroughly enjoyable holiday treat, avail yourself of the "Enchanted Holiday" Room Pacakage offering P1,650++ (room only) or P2,500++ (with buffet breakfast for two) from Dec. 15, 2003 to Jan. 7, 2004 (excluding Dec. 30 and 31). These magical rates are for a maximum of two adults and two children below 12 years old in a Deluxe Room.

Bid adieu to 2003 atop the city skyline on Dec. 30 and 31. Stay at the posh Club Levels at P5,888++ at an Executive Deluxe Room for two adults. An exclusive invite to a New Year's bash at the Club Lounge is included. For those who wish to stay at the 15th to 22nd floors, avail yourself of P4,388++ at a Deluxe Room. And for those staying at the 4th to 14th floors, avail yourself of P3,888++, also at a Deluxe Room. These rates are for a maximum of two adults and two children. The "Enchanted Holiday" room rates are offered to local residents only.

For more information and reservations, call the New World Renaissance Hotel at 811-6888.

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The Peninsula Teddy Bear is the perfect stocking filler for Christmas 2003

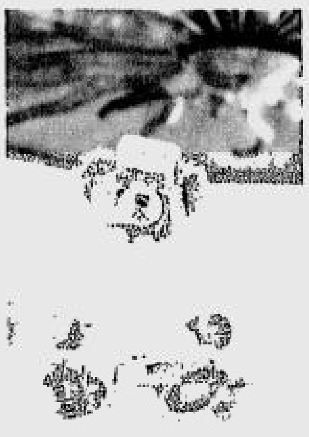
CUTE and cuddly, not many people can resist The Peninsula Teddy Bear.

The perfect stocking filler for Christmas 2003 is The Peninsula Pageboy Teddy Bear that's part of a 27-piece limited edition collection. These lovable bears are hand-fashioned and costumed in The Peninsula pageboy's traditional white uniform whose hand-sewn eyes and embroidered noses add charm and character to their appearance. And as there are only 27 of these irresistible stuffed critters (that's because The Peninsula Manila is celebrating 27 years of impeccable service this year), they make a desirable and welcome addition to any Teddy bear lover's collection.

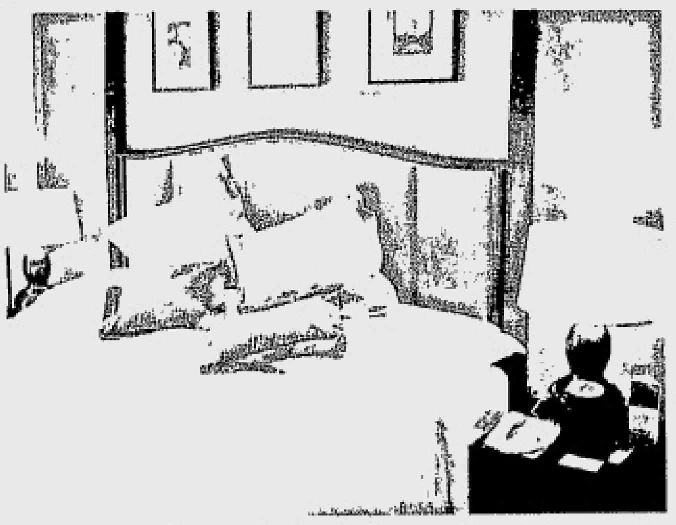
Hurry and get your limited-edition and individually hand-numbered The Peninsula Pageboy Teddy Bear at only P2,727.

The limited-edition Peninsula Pageboy Teddy Bear collection is available at Peninsula Exclusivités.

For inquiries, contact Peninsula Exclusivités at 887-2888, extension 2968 and 2970.



One whimsical Christmas, one great rediscovery



EVERYONE is often caught by surprise when suddenly one realizes that Christmas is fast approaching. No cause for alarm, Taal Vista Hotel gives you the opportunity to take advantage of this year's Christmas season and plan your Family holiday celebration through the hotel's fabulous "Holiday Hot Deal."

Make your holiday special. Experience a memorable and affordable luxury on this festive season. From Dec. 22 to Jan. 7, 2004 the newly renovated Taal Vista Hotel offers your luxurious accommodation at amazingly affordable rooms rates with breakfast for two persons. Rates start from P4,000 nett for an overnight stay in a Superior Room and P5,000 nett for a Deluxe Room (based on single or twin sharing). As an added privilege, if you avail yourself of the hotel's Christmas set dinner for Dec. 24, you can enjoy a 20-percent discount off the Holiday Hot Deal price!

Priced at only P600 nett with a glass of wine, the Christmas Set Dinner is a lavish 4-course set menu specially prepared to celebrate the joyful season, featuring authentic Chinese flavors at the café-on-the-ridge.

Taal Vista Hotel invites you to a unique and one whimsical Christmas celebration amidst the soothing backdrop of Taal Lake and Volcano. The hotel, a Tagaytay City landmark, is a mere 90-minute leisure drive from the Metro. It is managed and operated by the FilBarcelo Group.

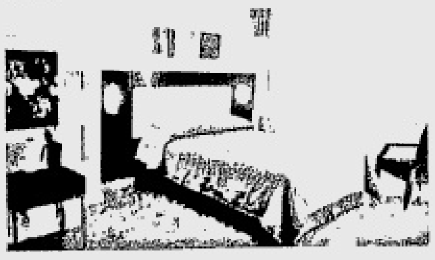
For reservations and inquiries on the hotel's Holiday offerings, call the Manila Sales office at 889-5046 or 889-1000. Visit www.barcelo-asia.com.

Astoria Plaza offers special Christmas and New Year room promo

SPEND the holidays with your loved ones and make it an unforgettable Yuletide experience at the Astoria Plaza. Savor the comfort and amenities of full-serviced residential suites at a holiday slash rate! Avail yourself of Astoria Plaza's special Christmas and New Year Room Promo for only P2,350 for a one-bedroom suite and P3,550 for a two-bedroom suite.

These special holiday room packages include daily breakfast buffet, complimentary bottled mineral water, free use of the gym and pool, 25-percent discount on weekend lunch buffet at the Café Astoria, 10-percent discount at the Stresscape Spa and a surprise Christmas token in the room. The above rates are subject to service charge and applicable government tax. Astoria Plaza's special Holiday Room Promo is valid from Dec. 16 to Jan. 5.

The 35-storey Astoria Plaza consists of full-serviced residential suites conveniently located at 15 J. Escriva Drive, Ortigas Business District, Pasig City. The Astoria Plaza is in close proximity to the Makati central business district and is within a short distance to top business addresses, academic institutions, shopping malls, entertainment facilities and sports facilities. The Astoria Plaza is managed with distinction by Genesis Hotels and Resorts. For inquiries and reservations, visit or call 687-1111.



Tuesday is ladies night at Fiesta San Miguel

LADIES, your Tuesday nights will never be the same! Because dining or partying at the Fiesta San Miguel Restaurant and Bar of Dusit Hotel Nikko will mean special treatment on this night.

Dubbed as "Tuesday Ladies Night", lady guests will not only receive a rose but are also entitled to perks such as: 20-percent discount on food, a P200++ beer all-you-ean from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., 50-percent discount on selected standard drinks from 5:30 p.m. onwards and complimentary pica-pica of the day. Birthday celebrants will receive a complimentary cake, and a souvenir snap shot with friends. To add more fun and excitement, there will be some games and prizes.

Fiesta San Miguel is the first and only bar and restaurant in a deluxe hotel offering freshly brewed San Miguel beer along with an array of Filipino and international cuisines.

So, have an out-of-the-ordinary Tuesday night, visit Fiesta San Miguel and enjoy the Ladies Night. For queries and reservations, call 867-3333 extension 3308.

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6 MASTER & COMMANDER
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11 CHAVIT SINGSON
12 MR. SUAVE

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2	JEEPERS CREEPERS 11:15, 1:45, 4:15, 6:45, 9:15	5	STAR RUNNER 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
3	FIGHTING TEMPTATION 11:00, 1:40, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00	6	THE GRUDGE 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:55, 9:00
7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:55	9	SCARY MOVIE 3 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:55, 9:00
8	LOONEY TUNES 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	10	COLD CREEK MANOR 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00

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3 CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
4 FIGHTING TEMPTATION - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
5 OUT OF TIME - 10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40
6 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY - 10:10, 12:10, 2:10, 4:10, 6:10, 8:00, 10:00
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8 BABAE SA BREAKWATER

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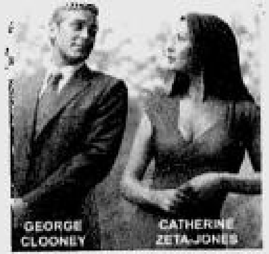
MR. SUAVE	4	MR. SUAVE
FIGHTING TEMPTATION	5	WRONG TURN

Star Mills San Fernando, Pampanga (045)875-1927 (045)961-8270		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5858
LOONEY TUNES	1	JEEPERS CREEPERS
SEX SCANDAL	2	OUT OF TIME
MR. SUAVE	3	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS	4	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
JEEPERS CREEPERS	5	STAR RUNNER
SCARY MOVIE 3	6	BABAE SA BREAKWATER

Bacolod (034)441-0450/59		Iloilo (033)338-8070 to 78
THE SPY	1	THE SPY
LOONEY TUNES	2	UPTOWN GIRLS
MR. SUAVE	3	CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
GIGLI	4	LOONEY TUNES
LIBERATED	5	MR. SUAVE
BELPHEGOR	6	THE PHONE

In the BATTLE of the SEXES, who will be the FIRST to BLINK and FALL in LOVE?



INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
Engage the enemy

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OPENS DECEMBER 10 IN SELECTED THEATERS ONLY

WARNING... IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU. As hot as today's headlines! First the high fever, followed by shortness of breath, then dry cough, headache and muscular stiffness. Then a slow painful death awaits the victim as the demonic virus slowly devours your body tissues.

NO PLACE TO HIDE, NO PLACE TO RUN. EVIL STRIKES FROM WITHIN.

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CATCH IT!

LIONS GATE FILMS presents CABIN FEVER STARRING RIDER STRONG JORDAN LADD JOEY KERN JAMES DEBELLO CERINA VINCENT GIUSEPPE ANDREWS directed by ELI ROTH

VALENTINE IN DECEMBER
NOW SHOWING

MATINDING LABAN 'TO, SINO KAKAMPI MO?

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 | Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

In the BATTLE of the SEXES, who will be the FIRST to BLINK and FALL in LOVE?

GEORGE CLOONEY
CATHERINE ZETA-JONES

INTOLERABLE CRUELTY

Engage the enemy.

MAGIC 89.9

NOW SHOWING IN CEBU CITY

AYALA S.M. ORIENTE GAISANO MACTAN GAISANO TABUNOK

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP.

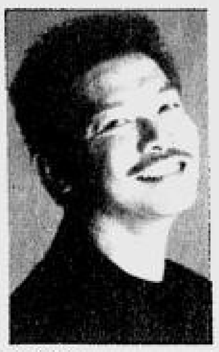
WARNING

There is a videotape. If you watch it, seven days later... you'll die laughing.

ENEMA
SCARY MOVIE 3
MAGIC 89.9
MIRAMAX DIMENSION

Mon sings jazz, Kapampangan songs

SHOW TIME


DAVID

MON David takes center stage at the C Music Hall (Friendship Road, Clarkview, Angeles City, Pampanga) on Dec. 5 and 12, for an intimate evening of jazz standards, classics and *Kapampangan* love songs.

Backed by Colby de la Calzada on bass, Koko Bermejo on drums and Elhmir Saison on piano, Mon will sing such songs as "Moondance," "Like A Lover," "Windmills of Your Mind," "Alfie," as well as cuts from his solo albums and new *Kapampangan* originals.

Mon started out with the Fourplay band in the late '80s. Although he was a voice and composition major at the UP College of Music, he was also a proficient drummer who was eventually "discovered" by the APO Hiking Society. Mon soon became the group's vocal coach and its "fourth member."

"It was the APO who really opened doors to my eventual solo career," says Mon. "They were very receptive to new ideas."

Mon was soon asked to play for the likes of Jacqui Magno and Joey Albert.

He found it hard to resist the call of the spotlight.

"It was a dream come true for any budding musician/singer," he recalls. "Imagine playing drums for the country's hottest artists, and then being called onstage to sing with them!"

Aside from producing the hit album "Mga Kuwento ng Apo," Mon also found himself taking on other roles, including in theater. He was in the 1999 musical "Rama at Sita," where he played the king.

Mon cites Tony Bennett, Kurt Elling and Mark Murphy as his main influences. Though now busy working on his third album (with all-original material, he says), Mon finds time to give one-on-one voice lessons.

And despite his heavy Western jazz influence, Mon has lately been inspired by Kapampangan folk melody. "I'm planning to do an album of purely native songs," he says.

Mon will also perform in a benefit show for the Aeta Foundation on Dec. 5, at 7 p.m., at the Holiday Inn, Clarkfield, Pampanga. He will also sing at the launch of an all-Kapampangan album, "Kapampangan Ku" of Arti Sta. Rita, a local theater group, on Dec. 7, 2 p.m. at SM Pampanga

YOU ADMIRED HIM IN "METEOR GARDEN" NOW, GET READY TO FALL IN LOVE...
IN HIS FIRST-EVER INTERNATIONAL FILM
The Star of the Sensational Group F4
VANNESS WU
A HK$60 Million Production
STAR RUNNER
FILMKO PRESENTS VANNESS WU ANDY ON A DANIEL LEE FILM "STAR RUNNER" KIM HYUN-JOO RICHARD MAMOOD JUDE POYER AND BRANDON RHEA MUSIC BY HENDRY JAMES LAI STORY BY VANNESS WU EDITED BY AZRAEL CHUNG WRITTEN BY ABE KWONG & DANIEL LEE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ALBERT CHOW PRODUCED BY CATHERINE HUN DIRECTED BY DANIEL LEE
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the Fighting Temptations
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Featuring new music from: BEYONCÉ, DESTINY'S CHILD, MISSY ELLIOTT, ANGIE STONE, SHIRLEY CAESAR AND THE O'JAYS
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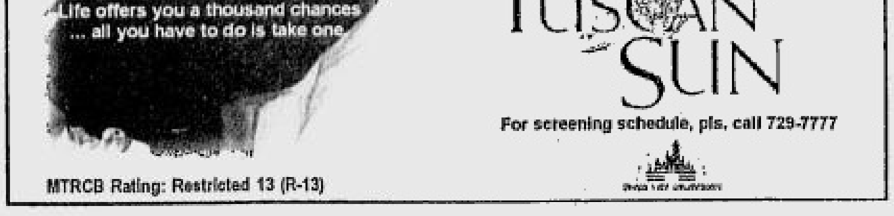
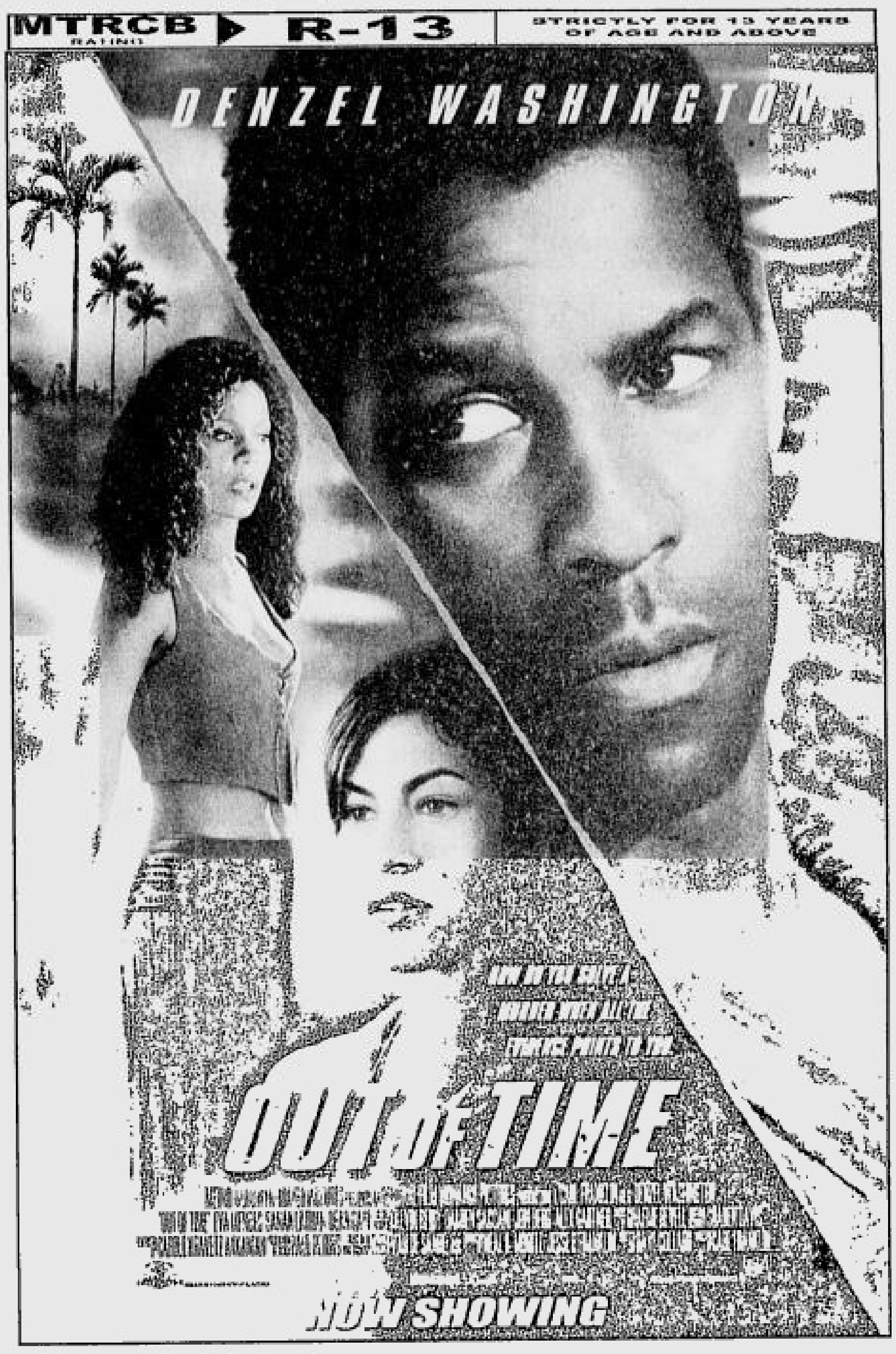
Yule Love our Acrobats going mad in Acromania
An action-packed trampoline show featuring Olympic-trained acrobats from Australia
AYALA CENTER MAKATI Dec. 7 - 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm Dec. 8 - 1pm, 3pm, 5pm Dec. 9 - 5pm, 7pm
ALABANG TOWN CENTER Dec. 12,13 & 14 11am, 3pm, 6pm
AYALA CENTER CEBU Dec. 19 & 20 11am, 4pm, 7pm Dec. 21 11:30am, 3:30pm, 6:30pm
ALASKA


AYALA CINEMAS
NOW ON IT'S 6TH WEEK EXCLUSIVELY AT
GREENBELT 3 CINEMAS
"A Romantic Winner!" — E! Online
"Two Thumbs Up!" — Ebert & Roeper
DIANE LANE
UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN
Life offers you a thousand chances ... all you have to do is take one.
For screening schedule, pls. call 729-7777
MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)


MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
DENZEL WASHINGTON
HOW DO YOU SOLVE A MURDER WHEN ALL THE EVIDENCE POINTS TO YOU.
OUT of TIME
NOW SHOWING

NOW OPEN!!!
ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD
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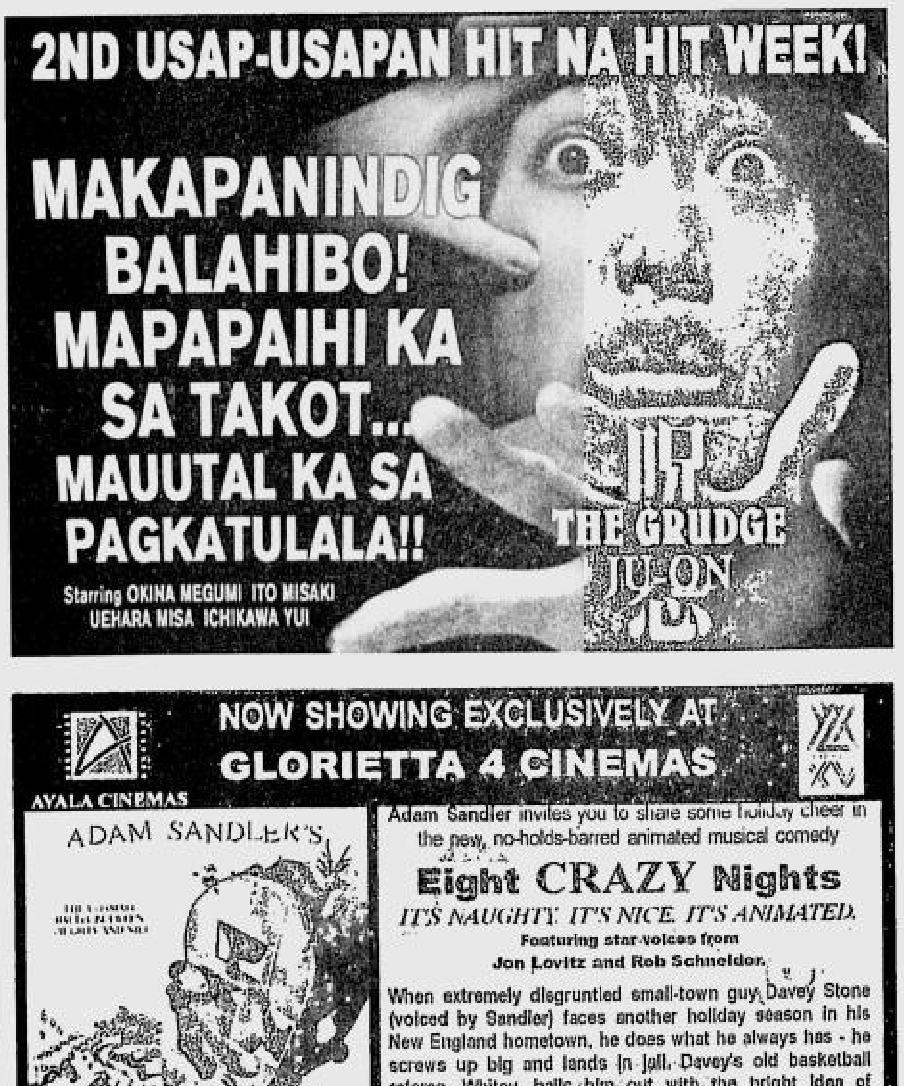
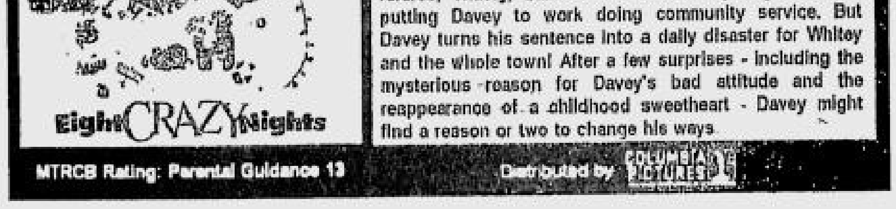
MOVIEWORLD


2ND USAP-USAPAN HIT NA HIT WEEK!
MAKAPANINDIG BALAHIBO! MAPAPAIHI KA SA TAKOT... MAUUTAL KA SA PAGKATULALA!!
THE GRUDGE JU-ON
Starring OKINA MEGUMI ITO MISAKI UEHARA MISA ICHIKAWA YUI


AYALA CINEMAS
NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT GLORIETTA 4 CINEMAS
ADAM SANDLER'S Eight CRAZY Nights
Adam Sandler invites you to share some holiday cheer in the new, no-holds-barred animated musical comedy
Eight CRAZY Nights
IT'S NAUGHTY. IT'S NICE. IT'S ANIMATED.
Featuring star-voices from Jon Lovitz and Rob Schneider.
When extremely disgruntled small-town guy Davey Stone (voiced by Sandler) faces another holiday season in his New England hometown, he does what he always has - he screws up big and lands in jail. Davey's old basketball referee, Whitey, bails him out with the bright idea of putting Davey to work doing community service. But Davey turns his sentence into a daily disaster for Whitey and the whole town! After a few surprises - including the mysterious reason for Davey's bad attitude and the reappearance of a childhood sweetheart - Davey might find a reason or two to change his ways.
MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13
Distributed by COLUMBIA PICTURES

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Maui: My decision is final

From page A28

bu than be exposed to show biz here.

"I like her being simple. *Mahirap na, 'pag nagpunta dito sa Manila, baka magbago pa. O maagaw* ," he added with a laugh. "She keeps me grounded."

Medwin's b-day

I TOOK a break from my "mourning rituals" and allowed myself to have a good time at the birthday bash of a friend I can never live without, **Medwin Marfil** of True Faith, at our fave chill-out place, Aruba Libis. It was just a gathering of Med's bandmates and closest chums. He has every reason to celebrate because True Faith remains in demand despite the entry of new bands in the scene.

True Faith's hits "Kung Ok Lang Sa 'Yo" and "Wag Na Lang Kaya" are included in the band's newly released acoustic compilation of bestsellers. They are also cooking up a new album on the EMI label that will be out early next year.

This December, True Faith is performing at Hard Rock Café on Dec. 5; Malolos, Dec. 6; Nueva Ecija, Dec. 9; Cabuyao, Dec. 12; Glorietta, Dec. 13; Virgin Café, Dec. 14; Ultra, Dec. 16; SM Lucena, Dec. 18; Negros Occidental, Dec. 20' Streetscape, Dec. 26; Guagua; and Virgin Café, Dec. 27.

Happy, happy birthday, Med! Thanks for making everything sweeter!

Personal

My deepest thanks to *Dennis* and **Nana Aoyong** of the coolest bar in Baguio, **Cactus Bar** on Legardo Road, and the yummiest Japanese resto, Shiki Restaurant Abanao Square in the Pines City. Your warm reception and the cool Baguio weather go together well!

Birthday cheers to my round-the-clock friend Jie Vidal. Thanks for being there for me even before I holler for you.

For feedback, e-mail friends_at_dsquare@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

LOONEY TUNES GP 11:55, 1:50, 3:45, 5:40, 7:35, 9:30	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS GP 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00	OUT OF TIME R13 1:10, 3:25, 5:40, 7:55, 10:10
JEEPERS CREEPERS R13 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50	STAR RUNNER PG13 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:40	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY PG13 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:20

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

Hawkers Market
FOOD FESTIVAL
THURSDAYS & FRIDAYS
6PM ONWARDS

POWER PLANT MALL

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	MR. SUAVE
Ali 2	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
Ali 3	FIGHTING TEMPTATION
Ali 4	OUT OF TIME
Ali 5	STAR RUNNER
Ali 6	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
Ali 7	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY

ARANETA COLISEUM

DEC 3	PBA FINALS 3: SMB VS. COKE
DEC 5	PBA FINALS 4: COKE VS. SMB
DEC 7	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
DEC 8	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
DEC 10	PBA: COKE VS. SMB (if necessary)

Opens Dec. 23 DISNEY ON ICE "Beauty & The Beast"
BUY YOUR TICKETS EARLY TO GET THE BEST SEATS!
Call TicketNet at 911-5555

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	CHAVIT
CINEMA-2	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-3	SCARY MOVIE 3
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LOONEY TUNES
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	COLD CREEK MANOR
CINEMA-6	MASTER & COMMANDER
CINEMA-7	MATRIX REVOLUTIONS
CINEMA-8	AKO, IKAW O SIYA
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	JEEPERS CREEPERS
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	FIGHTING TEMPTATION
CINEMA-12	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-14	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
CINEMA-15	MR. SUAVE
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	MASTER & COMMADER
CINEMA-1	SEX SCANDAL
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-4	CLOSED
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

OPENS DECEMBER 10
#1 MOVIE IN AMERICA

A GIANT WITH A HEART OF GOLD AND A BAGFUL OF PURE MAGIC
elf

THEATRE MALL
GREENHILLS
a landmark reinvented!
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 1	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50 P13
CINEMA 2	FIGHTING TEMPTATION 12:25, 3:10, 5:55, 8:40 GP

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GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA • 7224496

MUSIC MUSEUM

DEC 5	HITBACK	9:00PM
DEC 6	IRONN MAN & IRONN MAIDEN	5:00PM

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AYALA CINEMAS
PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	1 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2	ArtFilm 1 ASH WEDNESDAY 12:40 2:45 4:50 6:55 9:00	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 OUT OF TIME 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10 11:30	THX 1 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
2 STAR RUNNER	2 THE GRUDGE	2 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY 1:05 3:15 5:25 7:35 9:45	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY 12:25 2:35 4:45 6:55 9:05 11:15	2 OUT OF TIME
3 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 OUT OF TIME 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10 10:30	REGINE VELASQUEZ Dec. 5&6, 12&13, 19&20 9PM	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 STAR RUNNER 12:10 2:20 4:30 6:40 8:50 11:00	3 FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
4 SCARY MOVIE 2	4 ADAM SANDLER'S 8 CRAZY NIGHTS		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN 1:30 3:45 6:00 8:15 10:30	4 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
	5 LOONEY TUNES		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 COLD CREEK MANOR	5 LOONEY TUNES
	6 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY			
	7 FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS			

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Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 JEEPERS CREEPERS-2
2 SCARY MOVIE
3 STAR RUNNER
4 OUT OF TIME
5 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
6 MASTER & COMMANDER
7 INTOLERABLECRUELTY
8 MR. SUAVE
9 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
10 GRUDGE-1

Pearl Plaza Cinemas
(Parañaque) tel. 853.4486
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 RESERVE
Golden Pearl THX RESERVE

Masagana CINEMA 1 2 & 3
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 : 833.3274
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 STAR RUNNER
3 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 STAR RUNNER
2 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
3 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
4 COLD CREEK MANOR
5 AKO, IKAW, SIYA

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 AKO, IKAW, SIYA
3 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
4 MR. SUAVE
5 INTOLERABLECRUELTY
6 OUT OF TIME

M star
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Las Pinas) tel 873.5004
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) TEL. 893-4225, 892-2503
LOONEY TUNES

Center Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MR. SUAVE
2 MASTER & COMMANDER

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL, INC
tel 930.9515
1
2
3

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) TEL. 776-74-21
1
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

GOTESCO CINEMAS

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588
1 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
5 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
6 STAR RUNNER
7 OUT OF TIME
8 JEEPERS CREEPERS-2
9 FIGHTHING TEMPTATION

Gotesco Caloocan
tel 362.3508
2 RESERVE

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364-3781
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 MR. SUAVE
3 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
4 OUT OF TIME
5 STAR RUNNER
6 FIGHTHING TEMPTATION
7 JEEPERS CREEPERS-2
8 THE TRAIN
9 AKO, IKAW, SIYA

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0082
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
3 STAR RUNNER
4 COLD CREEK MANOR
5 MR. SUAVE

Gotesco Ortigas
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1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 MR. SUAVE
3 OUT OF TIME
4 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
5 STAR RUNNER

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1 RESERVE

Sampaquita
(Cubao) tel 911.7888
1 RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724
Dilson ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
Lords ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
Jennet RESERVE

PARK THEATRE Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 STAR RUNNER
2 OUT OF TIME
3 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
4 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238
1 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
2 OUT OF TIME
3 RESERVE
4 STAR RUNNER
5 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER

FRC Cinema
(Talaba Bacoor Cavite)
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta
ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7
tel 911.3101 loc. 821.8242.8400
1 MR. SUAVE
2 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER
3 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
4 OUT OF TIME
5 STAR RUNNER
6 JEEPERS CREEPERS-2
7 INTOREFABLE CRUELTY

FarmersPlaza CINEMAS
tel 911.3101 loc. 821.8242.8400
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa Laguna) TEL. (049) 837-0926
1 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
2 SEX SCANDAL
3 MR. SUAVE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
2 COLD CREEK MANOR
3 THE SPY
4 MR. SUAVE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MR. SUAVE
2 THE SPY
3 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
4 COLD CREEK MANOR

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 TMR. SUAVE
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
3 WISHER
4

Cinema 2000 MetroTown
(Tarlac) tel(045) 982.1729
1 MR. SUAVE
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
3 UNDERWORLD
4 MASTER & COMMANDER

Magic Star Cinema
(Tarlac City) tel (045) 611.4305
1
2
3

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
2 SEX SCANDAL
3 PAMASAK BUTAS
4 ANG BABAE SA BREAKWATER

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 COLD CREEK MANOR
2 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
3 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
4 SEX SCANDAL
5 MR. SUAVE

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
1 SEX SCANDAL
2 IDENTITY
3

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558
1 FIGHTING TEMPTATION
2 COLD CREEK MANOR
3 SEX SCANDAL

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 RESERVE
2 SEX SCANDAL
3 MR. SUAVE
4 MASTER & COMMANDER

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657
1 MR. SUAVE
2 MAPANUKSO
3

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY
2 WRONG TURN
3 COLD CREEK MANOR
4 MR. SUAVE

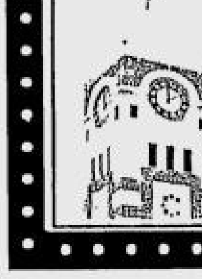
Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045)887-6001 TO 03
1 RESERVE
2 INNER SENSES
3 SCARY MOVIE
4 WISHER

Cine Nepo Mall
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887-0121
1 MR. SUAVE
2 WISHER
3 SCARY MOVIE
4 LOONLEY TONES

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

OPENING IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

Limp Bizkit shows canceled due to security alert

WITH APOLOGIES, the band says it will come "once security for their fans can be assured."

By Marinel R. Cruz

A UNITED STATES State Department warning of increased security threats in the Southeast Asian region prompted the rap-metal band Limp Bizkit to cancel its shows in Manila, Bali and Bangkok this month.

The cancellation also came after Fred Durst, the band's front man, had an accident while performing at a recent show in New York, resulting in seven stitches to his face.

"The band wishes to extend their deepest apologies to their fans in Southeast Asia and promise to return once security for their fans can be assured," concert promoter Michael Hosking told Singapore's Straits Times.

The MTV website (www.mtv.com) also reported that the band called off its Southeast Asian shows after the State Department issued a travel advisory following the recent terrorist bombing in Istanbul, Turkey.

The cancellation of the Limp Bizkit show in Manila followed that of singer Brian McKnight's concerts at Clark Field in Pampanga on Dec. 5 and at the Araneta Coliseum Dec. 6.

Limp Bizkit had been scheduled to perform on Dec. 9 at the Ultra open field in Pasig City. The show was supposed to be part of the groundbreaking "Summer Sanitarium World Tour."

But Limp Bizkit will still play five scheduled concerts in South Korea and Japan, starting in Seoul on Dec. 11 and ending in Osaka on Dec. 18, said MTV.

The band's next US show is in Philadelphia on Dec. 23.

Circle Communications, the Philippine promoter of the Limp Bizkit concert, said people who have bought tickets to the concert can get refunds at the Araneta Coliseum ticket office in Quezon City daily, from noon till 8 p.m.

"It is with deep regret that the 'Limp Bizkit Live in Manila' concert has been canceled, due to matters beyond the promoter's control," Lizza Nakpil of Circle Communications said in a statement.

DURST. 7 stitches to the face

For details on the refund, call 911-5555.

The cancellation of McKnight's shows was earlier announced by Viva Concerts, the producer of the American singer's performances in Manila.

McKnight is the singer or writer of such hits as "One Last Cry," "Love Is," "I Remember You," "Back at One," "You Should Be Mine" and "The Only One for Me," among others.

For more information, call Viva Concerts at 697-5853, 687-6181 local 715 or 620, or 687-1125.

Of Durst's accident, the Limp Bizkit website (www.limpbizkit.com) quoted him as saying, "I went into the pit in NY and climbed onto a railing and was in the line of fire when an unknown object hit me in the chin.

"I kept on singing," he said. "I felt a hot gush of something running down my neck and onto my hand. I looked down and sure enough I was bleeding like mad. Whatever it was had a very sharp edge and sliced my chin just like a razor blade."

Traffic rerotting scheme and other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: Your new traffic plan is being criticized by motorists because, instead of alleviating the traffic problem, it only adds to it.

Guest: Well, let's give it a few more days. And, if it still doesn't work, we can always come up with a new traffic rerotting scheme.

(Yes, we're all rotting here, no thanks to your traffic scheme!)

* * *

Host: How do you feel about the country and its chances of recovery?

Guest: Oh, I'm very optimistic.

Host: Is that so? What factors do you base your optimism on?

Guest: Well, for one thing, our business confident index is rising.

(We wish we could be as confident as you...)

* * *

Host: What is your reaction to the recent revelations of money laundering? Any action taken at all?

Guest: Definitely. No one can accuse us of weak response. An investigation is ongoing, even as you speak.

(Even as *we* speak? What about you?)

* * *

Host: What about accusations that you yourself are involved in the anomaly?

Guest: No way, I've never been do that in my life!

(Do tell!)

* * *

Newscaster: Here's breaking news, just in: *May naganap sa Makati kaninang hapon na panibagong* bank robby!

(*Ay*, bank robby Tan?)

* * *

Host: Bus operators are complaining that they're losing money. What are you doing to address their problems?

Guest: We have made many plans to help the flight of the bus transport system.

(Why not build an airport for the bus transport system?)

* * *

Host: Your festival this year has added some new features?

Guest: That's right. Aside from the usual performances, we have added dancing, and some street reading!

(How—literary!)

* * *

Host: Where do these *pili* products come from?

Guest: In Sorsogon, they grow pili sweets for dessert!

(Already processed on the tree, huh?)

* * *

Host: Your group is being accused of many things. Your response?

Guest: Well, it's nothing new. *Paulit-ulit na lang*. Over the years, I've read the same accusations many times—not only once, but twice!

(Wheee!)

Asia Media Festival

INTERESTING events at the ongoing Asia Media Festival 2003 in Singapore include:

An anti-piracy summit on Dec. 5 at the Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort. It focuses on key issues of intellectual property piracy and its impact on the cable, satellite and broadband industries.

An animation camp at the Singapore Science Center will be held from Dec. 11 to 13. The three-day program exposes schoolchildren to traditional, clay and toy animation, as well as special sound effects and "motion capture" techniques.

By the end of the camp, each child will have created an animation DVD using professional software for each step of the process, and experienced working in a team production environment. The camp is for Primary 3 to Primary 6 level children.

Finally, the Kodak screenings will showcase the works of nine budding Asia-Pacific filmmakers on Dec. 4. Selected films from Japan, Korea, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and the Philippines will be screened.

For Lav Diaz

FRIENDS of filmmaker **Lav Diaz** are raising funds for his medical expenses. Last Dec. 2, Lav was operated on for cancer (a mass between the lungs, above the heart) at the Lung Center.

Generous donors are asked to drop off their contributions at **Joel Torre's** Manukan Grille, near the Sampaguita Pictures studios. Call 721-9025. Or, you can deposit your donations at PS Bank near the restaurant under the name of **Banaue Miclat**.

For other queries, contact **Cesar Hernando** at 0917-3911133.

Fund-raising events are being developed, like the Christmas party concert at JT's Manukan at 6 p.m. on Dec. 13. Also, please pray for Lav's complete recovery!

Maui on leaving Viva: My decision is final

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

ALTHOUGH **Maui Taylor** swears that she's indebted to Viva Films for life, she feels it's time for her to grow as an artist.

Maui sighed, "I feel like even if I've gone bold, I still don't have enough money."

The irony is, she has shown almost every part of her body but she has nothing to show for it. Technically, she's still under contract with Viva but she has left Viva management and is now under the wings of Dondon Monteverde.

"I'm still part of Viva Hot Babes," said Maui. "The problem is, they have not contacted me regarding our shows. I don't want to pop up there uninvited. They know where to reach me if they need me. According to my contract, I still have to do about nine movies for Viva, but if they still don't give me any projects next year, I might have to resort to legal means. But of course, I'm still hoping we can talk things over."

Is there any chance that she would change her mind and go back and join the wards of Viva? She said, "My decision is final. I've thought about it long and hard, so there's no turning back now. I want to explore other options."

Heart without John

HEART Evangelista was spotted in a new hip bar in Makati cozying up to a guy who's not from show biz. They seemed lost in their own world.

Sorry to dampen the spirits of Heart and **John Pratts** fanatics, but looks like her heart belongs to someone else, unless that bar scene was just a harmless date.

Aliya alone

WHAT'S the real score why **Aliya Parcs** is no longer part of the band Prime Council? Remaining in the band are the soulful duo **Jedd Madela** and **Gail Blanco**.

I bumped into Aliya and she told me that it's because she has some gigs out of the country. But some quarters claim that she had a falling out with the band.

Whatever the real reason is, I'm sure Aliya has the guts to handle any intrigue that comes her way. After all, she survived the **Alvin Patrimonio** brouhaha unscathed.

Luke off to US again

LUKE Mejares is off to the US for a series of shows with Carol Banawa in the West Coast.

A few years back, Luke went to the States hoping to reunite with his long-lost dad, whom VJ **Sarah Meier** had tracked down through the Internet, but Luke went home disappointed. Luke has been sending his father his records and copies of magazine clippings about him, but his dad remains mum.

Instead of being bitter, Luke has diverted his angst to music. "I have more reason to strive so maybe someday he will be proud enough of me to recognize me as his son."

This time, Luke won't go to the US to see his dad. "As much as I want to see him again, I think it's best that I stay away for now," he said. "Maybe he isn't ready yet. Wrong timing."

It's been a long, hard climb for Luke. For someone like him who hasn't let success change him a bit, the well-deserved adulation he gets from the public should somehow compensate for his dad's apathy.

I asked Luke about his love life. "I see my girlfriend in Cebu once a month," he said. "We've been together for quite sometime now. She was with me when I looked for my dad in the States. I think our long-distance set-up works for us. She trusts me and I trust her. I'd rather that she stay in Ce-

MAUI/A27

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IT'S ONE FUN, FESTIVE SLEIGH RIDE AS JOEY DECKS THE DAYS OF DECEMBER WITH LOADS OF PARTYING, MOVIE-HOPPING AND HOLIDAY CHEER!

Joey's MOVIE SERIES

Dogs will talk, kids will go wild and a river will bring three friends together in a string of holiday previews!

The Rugrats sail into wild territory as they get shipwrecked on an island with the Thornberrys!
DECEMBER 1 - 7:30PM
POWERPLANT MALL - CINEMA 6

Man's best friend or master-in-waiting? Dogs from a distant planet take over the world and pick up a few treats along the way!
DECEMBER 6 - 11AM
POWERPLANT MALL - CINEMA 6

MYSTIC RIVER

Sean Penn, Tim Robbins and Kevin Bacon discover the key to a murder in their own troubled pasts.
DECEMBER 8 - 7:30PM
POWERPLANT MALL - CINEMA 6

Joey's Acoustic Night
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GREENBELT 1
DECEMBER 10,2003
WEDNESDAY - 9PM

Joey takes the kids on a carnival date with games, eats n' treats, face painting & lots of fun activities.

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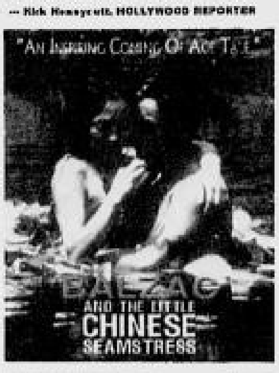
AYALA CINEMAS

OPENS DEC. 10 EXCLUSIVELY AT ArtFilm

"A CINEMATIC POEM."
— Kirk Honeycutt, HOLLYWOOD REPORTER



"An Inspiring Coming Of Age Tale"
BALZAC AND THE LITTLE CHINESE SEAMSTRESS

OFFICIAL SELECTION CANNES 2002
BEST FOREIGN FILM - 2003 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE

BALZAC
AND THE LITTLE CHINESE
SEAMSTRESS

In China in the early 70's during the dark years of the "Cultural Revolution", Ma and Luo, two teenagers considered as "bourgeois intellectuals" by the system, are sent to the small village of Sichuan in order to be "reeducated" into contact with the population. In this sinister period where the majority of books are prohibited and weddings before the age of 25 are illegal, Ma and Luo will clandestinely discover literature and love at the same time.

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Gov't, US firm seal $330-M energy project

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A $330-MILLION investment in a solar wafer factory at the Laguna Technopark would finally push through after proponent SunPower Philippines Corp. signed a final agreement with several government agencies, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said.

"A team representing the Department of Energy, National Power Corp., National Transmission Corp., Manila Electric Co. and Mirant Philippines Corp. worked to ensure that SunPower chose to locate its factory in the country," Perez said.

The official explained that through the project, which would be the largest such facility in Southeast Asia, SunPower intended to make the Philippines an export hub for solar wafers.

"SunPower would start manufacturing wafers representing a total capacity of 25 megawatts, but would increase to 150 MW in a few years," Perez said.

"We are very bullish about this project because it would the first in the country and because we believe that this will allow us to use solar power in our electrification efforts in the rural areas," he said.

Solar wafers are the materials used to build solar panels or solar modules that trap heat from the sun and convert this to electrical energy.

The panels, in turn, are major components of solar home systems that are usually installed in areas not connected to the main electricity grids and that serve as power sources.

In a previous statement, Perez said one of the major obstacles in the development of solar-based technologies was the cost of imported materials due to the absence of locally manufactured products.

Having a local factory would bring down costs and eventually make renewable energy sources like solar power more affordable, he said.

The official added that if SunPower would be selling at discounted prices, this would further ease the development of the downstream market for solar-based technologies.

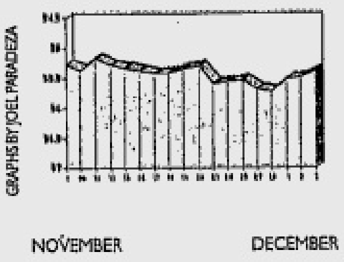
He said the use of such technologies for electrification had progressively improved over the last few years.

Department of Energy records showed that in 2001, there were 5,120 solar home systems installed—of which some 4,619 were for electricity, at least 433 were for heating water and about 68 were for drying crops.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



GRAPHS BY JOEL PARADEZA

₱ 55.38 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 03, 2003

¥ 108.64 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 03, 2003

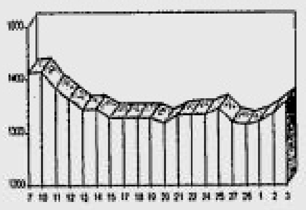
GOLD: $400.60-401.10
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 03, 2003

December 3, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.827472	1.000000	55.501000
Japan	Yen	0.007624	0.009214	0.511400
United Kingdom	Pound	1.432437	1.731100	96.077800
Hongkong	Dollar	0.106607	0.128834	7.150400
Switzerland	Franc	0.643047	0.777122	43.131000
Canada	Dollar	0.638038	0.771069	42.795100
Singapore	Dollar	0.481061	0.581362	32.266200
Australia	Dollar	0.605054	0.731208	40.582800
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.194944	2.652590	147.221400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220659	0.266667	14.800300
Brunei	Dollar	0.479667	0.579677	32.172700
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000098	0.000118	0.006500
Thailand	Baht	0.020741	0.025066	1.391200
UAE	Dirham	0.225303	0.272279	15.111800
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.208500	67.073000
Argentina	Peso	0.278610	0.336700	18.687200
Brazil	Real	0.282703	0.341647	18.961800
Denmark	Kroner	0.134410	0.162435	9.015300
India	Rupee	0.018118	0.021896	1.215200
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217785	0.263193	14.607500
Mexico	New Peso	0.073163	0.088417	4.907200
New Zealand	Dollar	0.535200	0.646789	35.897400
Norway	Kroner	0.122463	0.147997	8.214000
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014479	0.017498	0.971200
South Africa	Rand	0.131397	0.158793	8.813200
Korea	Won	0.000693	0.000837	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110957	0.134091	7.442200
Syria	Pound	0.016067	0.019417	1.077700
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.024302	0.029369	1.630000
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000519	0.000627	0.034800

STOCK MARKET

Stocks hit 3-week high

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

STOCKS ended up for the third straight day yesterday as the peso's recovery inspired bargain-hunting on select blue chips, led by top telecom firms PLDT and Globe Telecom.

The main index rose 1.57 percent or 20.93 points to a three-week high of 1,357.76, taking its gains for the year to a third.

"The market is recovering after its knee-jerk reaction to the peso fall, political developments and warnings of downgrades from international credit ratings agencies," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan. "There are still believers in the Philippine economy and they see that it can overcome these uncertainties."

The peso has slowly regained strength after falling to a record low of 55.85 to a dollar last week, helped by dollar inflow from overseas Filipino workers.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest telecommunications firm, rose 1.24 percent or P10 to P815. *Reuters*

Bear Stearns puts 'buy' on RP bonds

BEAR Stearns has strengthened its view on Philippine sovereign dollar bonds to "buy" after spreads blew out last week following Moody's Investors Service's announcement that it may downgrade the country's ratings.

Bear Stearns' move came less than a week after JP Morgan raised its recommendation on Philippine sovereign dollar bonds to "market weight" from "underweight" in its Asia Credit Index model portfolio.

"We recommend that investors buy Philippine sovereign bonds while spreads remain well above 450 basis points. These higher spreads are driven by uncertainty regarding the outcome of the May 2004 elections for president, congress and local government," Bear Stearns said in a Dec. 2 report released in Hong Kong.

"We see little difference in economic policy among the three leading candidates—President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, (movie star) Fernando Poe Jr. and ex-Senator Raul Roco. We believe the market will settle down once the election is over, and maybe even before then," it said.

The Philippines is the largest sovereign debt issuer in Asia outside of Japan.

Bear Stearns had said previously that it liked Philippine sovereign bonds and, with the recent spread widening, believed they were now more attractive.

Poe's decision to run for the presidency, following weeks of speculation and uncertainty that had unsettled the market, was seen as a positive because it clarified the political situation.

Spreads on Philippine sovereign dollar bonds due in 2014 are trading at 460 basis points over comparable US Treasuries. They were quoted at around 510 basis points immediately after Moody's announcement last week. *Reuters*

Peso continues recovery, closes at 55.38 to a dollar

By Clarissa S. Batino

BUENAVENTURA

STRONGER regional currencies and increasing dollar inflow from overseas workers allowed the peso to close at 55.38 to a dollar, gaining 11 centavos from Tuesday's close of 55.49:$1.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he was confident the peso could sustain its rally on the back of improving Filipino workers' remittance and better forecasts on exports in the coming months.

"We hope people would start focusing on economic fundamentals rather on the political events that are only temporary. Once the preoccupation with politics subsides, politicians are expected to focus on the economy as well," the central bank chief said.

He said the peso should remain stable at the 55:$1 level in the first quarter of 2004. "In the first three months of (next) year, remittance could be slow but we think it would be offset by stronger exports next year."

Exporters told the central bank during a meeting last Tuesday that they could even exceed the projected 10-percent growth in receipts in 2004 if costs such as power would go down.

Traders credited the strong regional currencies for the peso's sustained recovery. Most Asian currencies rallied including the Japanese yen and the Thai baht.

The peso was the sixth top gainer in Asia yesterday but remained the top loser on a year-to-date basis after depreciating by 3.2 percent since the start of 2003.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said that weak demand for dollars also eased the pressure on the peso. Turnover at the Philippine Dealing System reached $130 million in trading that saw the central bank buying some dollars from the spot market.

The peso opened at its lowest level at 55.45 to a dollar yesterday before strengthening to 55.35.

Yesterday's close was the highest since the 55.29:$1 on Nov. 20, a day before former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho announced his resignation. The local currency hit an historic low at that time of 55.585. The local currency also fell to 55.85 a day after actor Fernando Poe announced his candidacy and Moody's Investors Service warned of an impending downgrade. It closed at 55.69 on Nov.27 and recorded a record closing low of 55.73 a day later.

Traders said regional currencies rallied against the dollar after the United States announced a higher trade deficit and markets worried over the US government's protectionist policies amid low US interest rates.

But foreign analysts are expecting the US Federal Reserve to increase its policy rate by 100 basis points next year, a move that could spur higher interest rates in other economies, including the Philippines.

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CHEVROLET
BECAUSE LIFE IS A JOURNEY

Japan to hold free trade talks with RP, 2 others

By Isagani M. Yambot
Publisher

TOKYO—Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Tuesday night said Japan would begin bilateral negotiations on free trade agreements with the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia during the Japan-Asean Commemorative Summit meeting here Dec. 11-12.

In an interview with editors representing the Asia News Network, Koizumi also said Japan wanted to discuss the signing of a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with Asean members, although he believed that it was not really necessary because "we already have good relations with Asean."

"We attach great importance to our relations with Asean, Japan and Asean are partners, and we will strive to strengthen our ties," he said.

Expected to be signed at the Japan-Asean summit are:

- A declaration tentatively called the Asean-Japan Basic Document that will reaffirm the basic direction of Asean-Japan cooperation and give broad guidelines on Asean-Japan relations.
- The proposed Asean-Japan Joint Action Plan that will outline the specific measures to be carried out in the near future.

For Asean, Japan is the biggest trading partner along with the United States. In 2001, the United States accounted for 21 percent of Asean trade. Japan accounted for 20.2 percent

For Japan, Asean is the second largest trading partner after the United States (in 2002, the United States, 23.4 percent; Asean, 14.2 percent).

To make a wrong story short

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

DOWN here in our barangay, we just heard a bright idea from some politicos and radical groups. I think their motto is, to make a long story short, "if it concerns big business, we are against it."

They said that the ERC, or the Energy Regulatory Commission, the referee in the electric power play, should not even think of giving Meralco a rate increase.

Headlines screamed against the rate increase which the ERC just gave Meralco, amounting to 12 centavos per kilowatthour.

That, according to the politicos and the radical groups, was bad. And it was bad, apparently, not because their statements made for good quotes and sound bites.

It was also not bad, apparently, just because the increase will burden an average family, say, in Forbes Park with a monthly electric bill of about P250 more. See, it's not even toilet paper money!

* * *

IT'S just that, according to the ERC, Meralco actually needed the money to invest in new equipment, just to keep the quality of its service where it is right now.

But based on that stupendous bright idea, the ERC has no business minding Meralco's capital expenditure. Why, with the increase, Meralco even earns a scandalously sinful, whopping P2 billion!

The owners of Meralco, to those brand new heroes of consumerism, should be made to put up the money for expansion themselves. Wonderful!

Actually, it only means that we, all the guys down here in our barangay, must again cough up the money. Among the big owners of Meralco is the government.

And how does the government raise the money to invest in anything? By taxing us to death, how else? I tell you, those politicos really know how to kill us!

* * *

NOW we don't know where they even got the idea that a huge public utility such as Meralco can invest only P2 billion a year, and it can still hope to avoid public lynching for its poor service.

From what I know through all my years in the business news racket, that P2 billion is enough for Meralco to put up electric posts made of old recycled bamboo.

Normally, such as during the pre-Asian-crisis years in the early 1990s, Meralco should invest about $200 million a year. Today such an amount, thanks to the kindhearted speculators in the peso-dollar market, is equivalent to more than P11 billion.

Since Meralco is a little hard up, it is only investing about P5 billion a year, but with the P2 billion from the rate increase, it can thus invest P7 billion.

Now you do the math—how in the name of Einstein can P2 billion (from the rate increase) be anywhere near P7 billion (actual investment)?

* * *

LET us at least face the reality here. That additional earning for Meralco of P2 billion a year, as given by the ERB, serves as a sign of goodwill from the government.

Just how Meralco can even raise P5 billion for its capital expenditures, when its creditors are already hounding it day and night, remains close to impossible.

The banks—and for that matter, any interested investor in electric power—know only too well the hostile government policy in the sector.

Nobody will lend new money to Meralco, precisely because the lenders are afraid that Meralco and the entire power sector are the targets of a hate campaign.

Thus the lenders do not really think that Meralco is a safe borrower. If they still lend to Meralco, I will have to bring them personally to the mental hospital.

* * *

BUT the P2 billion in additional income of Meralco shows a little proof that the government is not out to kill the company.

In other words, that pittance of a rate increase can at least help Meralco raise the rest of the P5 billion which it needs for upgrading its facilities.

Unfortunately, it is not enough for the publicly listed Meralco to issue new stocks to raise money from its "owners," as those bright politicos suggested, no sweat.

I don't know if the politicos just think of all those fund managers as stupid, but nobody is dying to buy Meralco shares at the moment either.

The return on investment for Meralco, based on ERC figures, is only 7 to 8 percent. In comparison, treasury bills even pay better returns at 10 percent.

Plus, the T-bills are risk free—no "protest rally" against them, no politicos and radicals attacking them—since the IOUs have no ring of evil big business to them.

* * *

ALSO said to be behind the ERB ruling is the political future of Gloriaetta.

Some groups speculated that this cute administration of Gloriaetta worked on the rate increase to get Sen. Noli de Castro as her running mate in 2004.

Do a little one plus one, and there, De Castro was the creation of ABS-CBN, which was controlled by the Lopezes, who also controlled Meralco!

I can probably entertain such a speculation, if the guys around Gloriaetta, such as her economic and political advisers, are all stupid.

In effect, based on the speculation, Gloriaetta agrees to a rate increase which can lessen her votes, because she wants to get De Castro, who can add to her votes. They cancel each other out. Is that stupid or what?

Moreover, from what I heard in business circles, De Castro was already convinced to run with Gloriaetta because of 500 million reasons..

* * *

ANYWAY, one big problem of Meralco was the Supreme Court, which created fear in the hearts of investors that the government would enjoy frying them alive, once they put their money in the power sector.

To make a wrong story short, the Supreme Court said that Meralco must refund the rate increase it got, provisionally, about nine years ago. Total amount involved: P28 billion!

Everybody in the whole wide world, from those in the theoretical MBA classrooms to those in the real-world treasury rooms, compute returns on investments minus the income tax.

Why is that? Because the money for taxpayment does not belong to the stockholders. It is not part of their returns. It is actually the government's cut.

Yet the Supreme Court said that Meralco must include its tax payments as part of income. Everybody in the world thinks differently. I can only wonder who's right!

* * *

BUT the point is, now they are saying that the rate increase of 12 centavos was just a way for ERB to help Meralco cover the P28 billion refund. Really?

Again, that's P28 billion. The rate increase produces about P2 billion a year. Thus it will take Meralco roughly 14 years to recover every centavo of the refund, excluding interest, inflation, and lost income opportunity.

And I'm afraid that if we keep up this hate campaign against the power sector, nobody is going to come here to invest, and we need new investments right now.

Aside from the Supreme Court's taking back a rate increase which was given nine years ago, our policy does not exactly win us friends among the investors. It is a little on the if-it's-big-business-it-must-be-evil side.

* * *

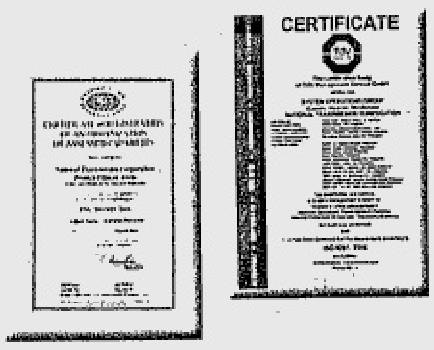
LOOK, in all of the past nine years, a huge utility firm such as Meralco got a rate increase of less than 10 centavos, including the one from that "unbundling" thing last May.

But the state-owned Transco, the new transmission company, started with a rate of 20 centavos, and it is now doing wonderfully

BREAKTIME/ B3

TransCo NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION

In just two years since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law the Electric Power Industry Reform Act that created the National Transmission Corporation (TransCo) among others, these much we have seen...

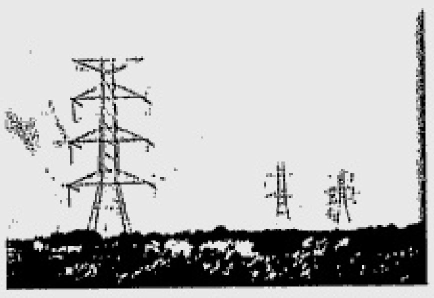


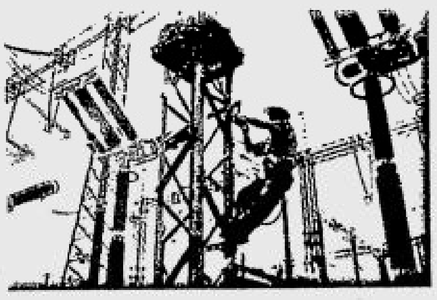
excellence

Inauguration of the state-of-the-art National Control Center

First and only system operations group in the ASEAN and second in the world to be awarded the ISO 9001:2001 certification

ISO 9001:2001 certification for quality sytem management of TransCo's Ilocos District office comprised of six substations





service

Completion of 17 critical transmission projects in 2003

Successful bidding and award of Leyte-Cebu and Cebu-Mactan Interconnection Projects that will address the future power requirements of Cebu

Fast track repair and restoration of toppled towers in Mindanao and Luzon

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serving the nation thru reliable grid operation

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FOLLOWING U.S. FED ADJUSTMENT

BSP seen raising key rates by 50 basis points

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday said it would jack up its overnight rates by 50 basis points or half a percentage point next year if the US Federal Reserve rate would be increased by one percentage point, as expected.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the policy-making Monetary Board would have to assess how the inflation in the country would be affected by a one-point hike in the US rates. The government hopes to keep the inflation rate between 4 and 5 percent next year from about 3 percent this year.

Asian and European Investors raised the issue of higher US rates during a teleconference with Buenaventura and National Treasurer Sergio Edeza on Monday.

The US rate is currently at one percent while the BSP overnight borrowing and lending rates are at 6.75 percent and 9 percent.

A rate hike in the US will raise the cost of its products. Since it is the world' largest economy, an increase in its inflation rate is seen to lead to higher inflation in other economies.

Edeza said that any increase in US rates would also lead to higher US treasury yields that were being used as benchmarks for bond issues. Thus, it would also raise the cost of the government's foreign borrowings.

Edeza said that the government would try to raise its entire dollar funding requirement for 2004 by January.

Buenaventura said any increase in the central bank's policy rates would be minimal.

"An increase in US rates to 2 percent from one percent is big but its effect on us would only be a 50-basis points adjustment, to bring our overnight borrowing rate to 7.25 percent which is not so bad," he noted.

The only time the BSP had adjusted its key rates this year was in July when they were cut by a quarter-of-a-percentage point.

But when the peso started acting up in August, it removed the tiering scheme that pays a decreasing rate for bank deposits in BSP.

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URC-Malayan Reinsurance merger OKd

BANK of the Philippine Islands' Universal Reinsurance Corp. (URC) is set to merge with the Yuchengco group's Malayan Reinsurance Corp. to form the country's biggest reinsurance underwriter.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, BPI corporate secretary Carlos Aquino said the stockholders of URC had approved the plan and the articles of merger with Malayan Reinsurance.

"When you put two companies together, you create a stronger company with a bigger capital base," BPI assistant vice president for corporate finance Luis Ursia said in an interview.

He also said the merger would allow the two companies to rationalize operating costs.

URC, being the bigger company, will be the surviving entity but it will be renamed Universal Malayan Reinsurance Corp. (UMRC).

The merger will result in an entity with an asset base of P2.47 billion, of which P2 billion shall be contributed by the BPI unit.

But while URC is a much bigger entity, Ursia said the agreement was for BPI and the Yuchengco group to hold equal stakes in UMRC.

"The BPI group will allow the Yuchengco group to equalize through selling some of its shares in UMRC," Ursia explained.

The merger is still subject to the approval of the Office of the Insurance Commission and will become effective upon the issuance by the Securities and Exchange Commission of the certificate of filing of the articles of merger.

Doris C. Dumlao

Breaktime

From page B2

with a rate of more than P1.

Thus Transco more than quadrupled its rates. And this is something uniquely Pinoy. All over the world, the rate of the transmission company is only about half the rate of the distribution company.

Here the Transco rate is even more than the rate of the distribution companies like Meralco and the electric cooperatives. Very unique!

* * *

REALLY, I can no longer count the number of times which the Napocor had to increase its rates, and yet Meralco had only one increase in nine years.

It was given a 17-centavo increase in 1994, which the Supreme Court took back after only nine years.

And so Transco can earn P13 billion this year. The government is sort of dressing up the bride. It wants to attract buyers for Transco.

But nobody is biting. There are no buyers for Transco. I guess the investors are seeing through the trap.

* * *

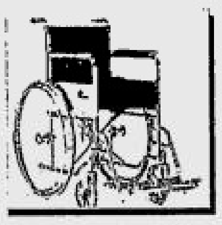
EVERYBODY knows that the government also trapped the Spanish company which invested in Meralco upon the government's own invitation, with a bit of cajoling.

The Spanish company spent hundreds of millions of dollars to buy into Meralco. It is now caught with an investment that has dwindled in market value.

Even if it wants to sell out at a huge loss, it just cannot. Simply because there are no takers for such a huge investment. Simply because of our hostile policy.

Think of it—who will want to invest in the power sector with the kind of clowns we have making the rules?

IMPORTED WHEELCHAIR



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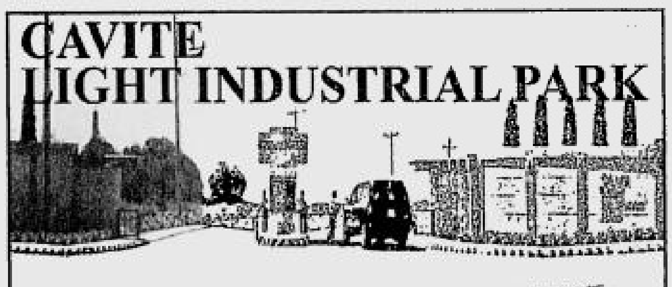

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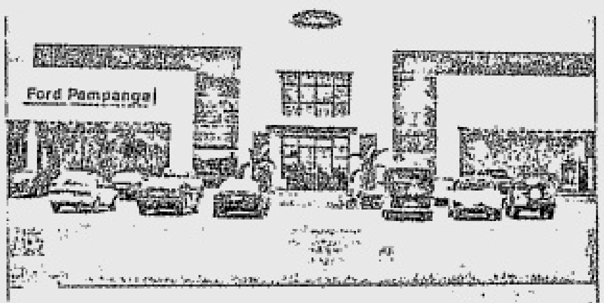

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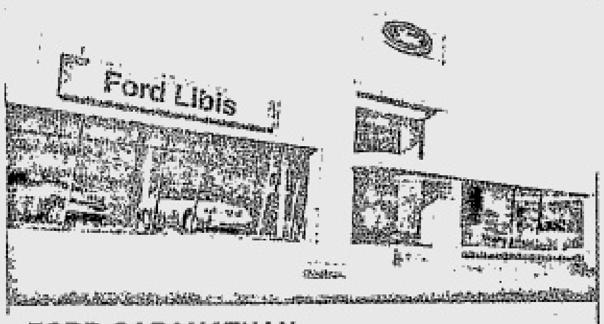

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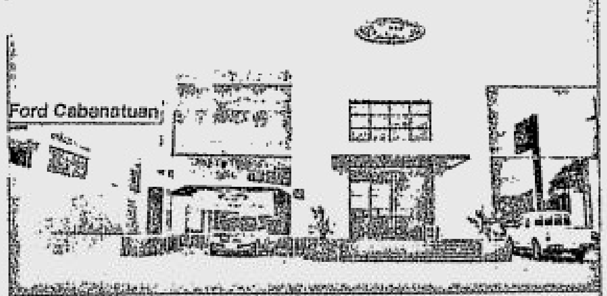

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World trade talks struggle as Dec. 15 deadline looms

GENEVA—Efforts to get World Trade Organization (WTO) talks back on track are making scant progress and there seems little chance of meeting a Dec. 15 deadline for a resumption, trade sources said on Tuesday.

Trade envoys in Geneva have been struggling to pick up the pieces of the WTO's Doha Round of free trade negotiations ever since ministerial talks collapsed in disarray in Cancun, Mexico, in mid-September.

In the latest sign of problems, Uruguay's WTO ambassador Carlos Perez del Castillo, who has been coordinating the bid, postponed a preparatory meeting of all the trade body's 146 member states from Dec. 5 to Dec. 9 to give himself more time for behind-the-scenes discussions.

The meeting will be the last before senior government officials gather on Dec. 15 for what could be a decisive moment for the trade round, which aims to boost the world economy by lowering barriers to business in goods and services.

Before leaving Cancun, ministers set the date for the senior officials' get-together in the hope that it could succeed where they had failed in reaching an outline agreement on some of the toughest topics, including reforming world farm trade.

"I reckon that this is just another sign that the 15th is not going to produce anything," said one trade envoy, referring to the postponement. "And it is a shame."

Trade envoys said Perez del Castillo's consultations with small groups of member states had failed to bridge the big gaps, particularly over agriculture where poorer states and farm goods exporters like Australia want deep cuts in big power subsidies.

On some questions, for example tariffs on industrial goods, the gap between what richer states wanted and what developing nations were prepared to give even appeared to have widened.

Some envoys blamed the impasse on a lack of urgency on the part of the European Union, which is still finalizing a review of its negotiating position after the Cancun debacle.

With the chances receding of any significant agreements in December, Perez del Castillo appeared likely to go for "plan B" which could involve a commitment to resume the work of the various WTO negotiating bodies in February, trade sources said.

Their work has been suspended as the Uruguayan diplomat, who is chair of the WTO's executive General Council, opted to focus attention on the four themes that sunk the Cancun meeting.

These were agriculture, non-farm goods, cotton and the so-called "Singapore issues"—new areas such as investment in which the EU and other richer states want to discuss possible rules which all WTO member states would have to observe. *Reuters*

Global growth not moving fast enough

NEW YORK—The global economy is not growing fast enough to provide jobs for millions of people who want them, according to a study released Tuesday by the Conference Board, a private business research group.

World economic growth rates have slowed sharply since the 1960s, with growth rates falling not just in the United States but also in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, the survey found.

Only East Asia and South Asia recorded stronger growth during the past decade than in the 1960s.

"It is startling to think that what was viewed as the boom times of the 1990s was actually the slowest-growing decade in the world economy in the past 40 years," said Gail Fosler, chief economist of the group and author of the analysis.

The current average annual economic growth rate of 2 to 3 percent in the global economy is not robust enough to absorb the emerging workforce, the study indicated.

"There is simply not enough growth to go around," said Fosler.

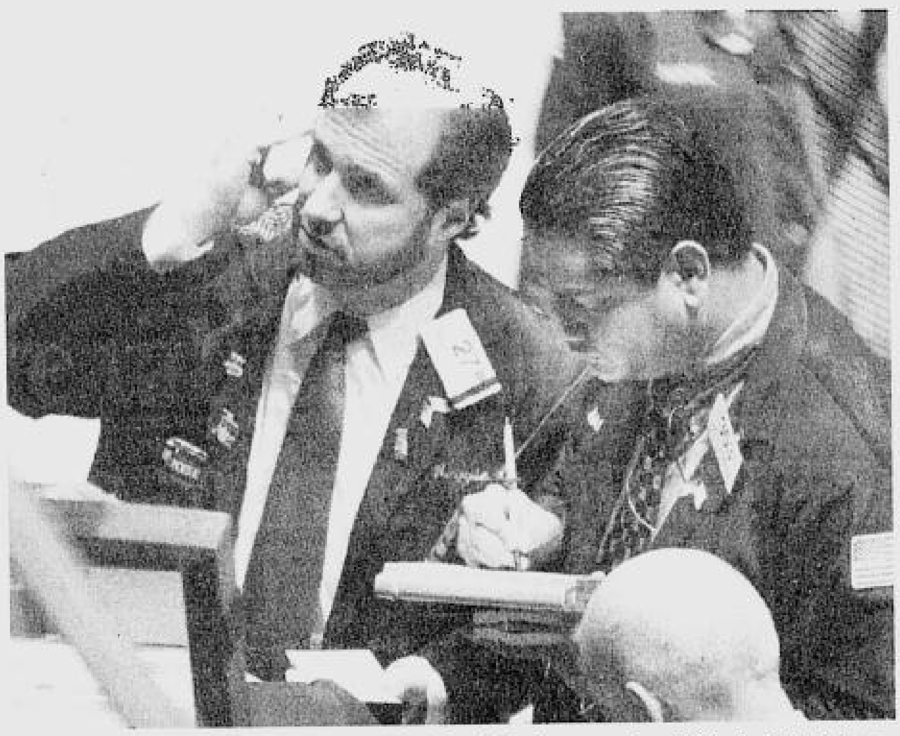
Global economic output is some $35 trillion, in roughly 200 countries, the report said.

At current growth rates, tens of millions of people are going to remain unemployed, and the ones who get jobs are going to put increasing pressure on living standards in higher-income countries, the board said.

Virtually all of the labor force growth is in emerging countries, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

"Among the advanced countries," says Fosler, "only the United States has been able to maintain its labor force growth, although about one-half of the new labor force entrants in the US are foreign-born."

"The real question is how everyone can advance faster together," said Fosler. *AFP*


TRADERS work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Dec. 2. Stocks inched down after the open as investors paused a day after pushing the market to fresh highs for the year.
REUTERS

IT spending to recover in '04; job cuts to continue—Gartner

SINGAPORE—A recovery in the global technology sector is underway with investments set to grow 4-5 percent to $2.1 trillion in 2004, but many executive jobs could be lost, research house Gartner said Wednesday.

"We now see true recovery in the making," Gartner's regional vice president said.

"The combination of business transformation with key technology advances, architectural changes, market forces and best practices will lead to a strong recovery for IT (information technology) in the near future," he said.

Gartner said companies will set aside bigger budgets in 2004 for technology upgrading in a bid to strengthen their businesses and raise productivity amid growing competition.

But the projected recovery in the technology sector is expected to result in widespread job losses, possibly numbering in the hundreds of thousands, as companies seek to trim costs by leveraging on technology to raise productivity, US-based Gartner said.

Workers affected by the job displacements are likely to be holding high-paying, white-collar positions, it said. *AFP*

Dresdner sees big slowdown in US economy next year; cites cut in consumer spending

TOKYO—The US economy will slow considerably next year as rising debt forces consumers to cut spending, hurting the global recovery and further weakening the dollar, an investment bank said on Wednesday.

Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein Chief Debt Strategist John Butler, presenting what he called a "contrarian view," told a Tokyo seminar that while major economies look good now, the optimism won't last.

"We do not believe we are at the beginning of a sustainable recovery," Butler said, adding that an inevitable slowdown in US consumer spending will knock away the main source of growth for many of the world's economies.

A recent rebound in the US, with the economy growing at over seven percent in the third quarter, has fueled growth in other economies, and many officials and economists are saying a global recovery has begun.

But Butler sees improved corporate earnings in the US being used to pay off debt rather than to invest, meaning less growth and little improvement in the employment situation.

This will translate into continued dollar weakness, with the US currency falling below 100 yen by the end of next year, he said.

Butler also said there is the beginning of a shift by Asian central banks away from investing in US Treasuries, but that the pace of the shift was very slow and was unlikely to have any impact on the US deficits, which are largely supported by Asian demand for US assets.

"Central banks do not make big changes in their holdings overnight," Butler said, adding that for many Asian countries the only way to keep their currencies weak is to buy dollars in the form of US assets.

Many Asian countries rely on exports for their economic growth and prefer weak currencies to make their products cheap.

The US government has taken aim in recent months at countries such as China, which it says has an unfair trade advantage by keeping its yuan currency in a fixed range against the dollar.

Butler sees China allowing the yuan to appreciate against the dollar by five to six percent by the end of next year as China's strong growth threatens to drive inflation up to levels that could destabilize its economy. *Reuters*

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of December 3, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	8,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.25	16.75	17.25	185,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	43.5	44	43.5	44	405,100
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	20
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34.5	35	34.5	35	113,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.57	670,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	27	26	26.5	492,400
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.5	24.25	24.5	22,200
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	3,200
Security Bank Corp.	16.75	17	16	17	120,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	9,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	55,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1740	1740	1740	1740	300
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	1,000,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1355	1360	1355	1360	3,850
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26.5	26	26.5	9,700
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.67	0.69	0.67	0.69	310,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	740	755	735	755	117,770
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	1,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.038	0.036	0.037	4,300,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	2,060,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	800	815	800	815	119,860
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	3,500,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15	15.5	15	15	1,006,200
Manila Electric Co. B	23.25	24	23.25	23.75	2,384,800
Petron Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.2	2.2	3,305,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	10,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.28	1.32	1.28	1.32	603,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	745,000
William, Gothong & Aboitiz	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	1,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	800,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	300,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	238,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	9,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17	17	16.75	16.75	149,200
Swift Food Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	260,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54	54.5	54	54.5	32,100
San Miguel Corp. B	60.5	61	60.5	61	220,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.36	30,000
Ayala Corp.	4.95	5	4.9	4.95	13,901,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	1,584,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.026	400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	490,000
APC Group Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	100,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.49	0.52	0.49	0.51	12,970,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.2	0.205	0.2	0.2	820,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.04	0.041	0.04	0.041	200,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	900,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	100,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	19.5	18.75	19.5	1,594,500
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	70,000
Ionics Inc.	1.52	1.56	1.5	1.5	104,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2	2	2	2	288,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.08	1.04	1.08	4,192,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	2,050,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.37	0.35	0.37	2,330,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	100,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	100,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.0875	0.0875	0.0875	0.0875	800,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	900,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	20	20	20	20	5,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.25	13.25	103,300
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	70,000
Mondragon Intl Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	26.5	27	26.5	27	840,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	900
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,100
Philweb Corp. - Warrants	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006	30,000,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	13,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.7	5.4	5.7	3,347,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	1,170,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.135	2,010,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	720,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.08	3,303,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	80,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	40,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.3	6.5	6.3	6.5	9,963,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	2,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.23	1,510,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	5,180,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	86,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	53,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.36	1,510,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	400,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	10,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	5,200,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	3,094,270	48,348,575
Comm'l & Ind'l	96,921,230	431,550,170
PRO	20,823,000	86,947,390
Mining	149,600,000	3,885,200
OIL	15,200,000	136,000
GRAND TOTALS :	285,638,500	570,867,335
Bank & Fin Svc	426.46	UP 7.
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,030.62	UP 19.
PRO	558.45	UP 17.
Mining	1,683.27	UP 47.
OIL	1.36	DOWN 0.
All Shares Index	852.68	UP 5.
Composite	1,357.76	UP 20.9

NO. OF ADVANCES: 44, NO. OF DECLINES: 16, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 38, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 98
NO. OF TRADES: 2,116

Disclosures

ARTURO Falco and Evodio Genelsa were appointed compliance officer and internal auditor, respectively, of **Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corp.**

***

PRIME Gaming Philippines Inc. bought 638,400 of its own shares at P20 per share.

***

BANK of the Philippine Islands' reinsurance subsidy, **Universal Reinsurance Corp.** will merge with **Malayan Reinsurance Corp.** The merged entity will be named **Universal Malayan Reinsurance Corp.**

***

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 423,000 of its own shares at P1.32 per share. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

OPEC set to defer more cuts as world economy buoys oil

VIENNA—OPEC producers bolstered by an upbeat world economy gathered on Tuesday for a meeting this week that is expected to keep supply limits steady as oil prices hold strong.

Hopes in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries for extending an oil price boom into a fifth straight year have brightened as economic growth accelerates in big energy importer the United States and emerging giant China.

Ahead of Thursday's meeting, ministers from Iran, Kuwait, the UAE, Indonesia, Libya and Algeria said US crude prices above $30 a barrel mean Opec should delay a follow-up to September's surprise cuts until early next year.

"There seems to be no excess supply, therefore I don't think there is going to be a need for any change at this meeting," said Abdulhafidh Zlitni of Libya, on his arrival in Vienna.

"As of today I don't see the need for any change," said Algerian Oil Minister Chakib Khelil.

"The prices are OK, inventories are OK but we are concerned about the prices in the second quarter of next year."

That view appears to have the support of OPEC powerhouse Saudi Arabia.

"We would only hurt ourselves and our reputation by cutting with prices so high," said a senior delegate, who is familiar with the thinking of many OPEC members, including Saudi.

Traders though remain wary of a repeat of the cartel's unexpected decision in September to cut output by 900,000 barrels a day to limits of 24.5 million bpd.

Unwilling to entirely discount a cut, the US crude futures market rose on Tuesday by 83 cents to close at $30.78 a barrel, supported by a cold spell in the United States.

Ministers are expected to schedule another gathering for late January or early February to decide on lower limits for the second quarter as fuel demand declines after the northern winter.

OPEC forecasts for a counter-seasonal fourth quarter stockbuild of 600,000 bpd on the 78 million bpd world market drove September's cut.

Its demand projections are proving conservative with actual inventory data so far this quarter suggesting a normal drawdown of some 700,000 bpd is underway, according to some analysts' estimates.

That has allowed OPEC to get away with doing little to implement the September decision.

A Reuters survey released on Tuesday estimated that output in November fell only 130,000 bpd, leaving the group 1.3 million bpd in excess of official limits.

That could bring calls on Thursday for better adherence to existing quotas.

Slow post-war recovery of Iraqi exports has helped contain growth in inventories.

Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum said on Tuesday that Baghdad plans to raise oil exports to two million barrels a day by the end of the first quarter next year. *Reuters*

People, Events & Products

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Editor Aries Espinosa

Cooking for the Holidays

IF THERE'S one thing that's becoming more and more apparent these days, it's that the holiday season is just around the corner. Some of the best things about the holidays are the cool and festive atmosphere, the spirit of giving, and last but definitely not least, the yummy festive mood.

Being Filipinos, we are by nature, great lovers. Working up a grand feast to go along with the celebrations is a tradition of almost every Filipino family during the Christmas season. This is why now, more than ever, is the perfect opportunity to learn a new cooking skill, brush up on one's cooking techniques, learn new recipes, or even start at the very beginning in the kitchen.

To help us with this endeavor are culinary masters Sylvia Reynoso-Gala, Ernest Reynoso-Gala, Leni Reynoso-Araullo, and Morella Reynoso-Gala. Learn-how-to-cook meals for every situation imaginable, from roast butterball turkeys, various pastries, cakes, and sweets, to pastas and succulent oriental dishes. No recipe is left unexplored. Lessons are guaranteed to be of the highest quality since each of the teachers is highly decorated. Sylvia was a gold medalist at the Academia de Gastronomos in Madrid Spain. Her sister Leni took her Masters degree in cake decorating at the Wilton School in Chicago, graduated from the Chicago School of Cooking and Catering, and also finished a full course of Thai Cooking at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. Her multi-cultural culinary expertise is credited to the fact that she has studied cooking in Europe, South America, and Hong Kong. Sylvia's two children also have impressive credentials. Her daughter Morella is a valedictorian from IHMES International School in the United Kingdom and studied cooking at Le Cordon Bleu in London and her son Ernest took a full course at the Thai Cooking School in Oriental Hotel in Bangkok and studied at the Chopstick and Hong Kong Town Gas Culinary Schools.

They are holding a cake decorating, sausage making, cooking and baking lessons at 181 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City. Call 671-4498, 671-4489. All courses are hands-on and suited to beginners and non-beginners alike. For those of you in the Baguio area, Morella offers cooking and baking lessons at Khaldi's Café Bistro, which is located at 10 Cariño St., across Palladin Hotel. Call Wells, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, Monday to Friday at (074) 444-8844.

NFA APPOINTS ASIANLIFE & GENERAL ASSURANCE CORP

National Food Authority (NFA) appoints AsianLife & General Assurance Corp as their insurer in providing employee benefit programs. In photo are (from left) AsianLife & General EVP Bobby M. Alfonso, AsianLife & General VP -legal counsel lawyer Edgar S. Tordesillas, AsianLife & General president and CEO Eulogio A. Mendoza, AsianLife & General AVP-worksite marketing Jing. M. Sotelo, NFA department manager for HRMD Evangeline V. Anago, NFA administrator lawyer Arthur C. Yap, NFA HRM officer 2 Emy G. Posing and NFA deputy administrator for finance and administration Pedro S. Hernando Jr.

MC HOME DEPOT OPENS AT FORT BONIFACIO

MC Home Depot, the one stop shop for all construction and home-furnishing needs, recently opened at the Fort Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. The ribbon cutting ceremony was headed by Taguig Mayor Sigfrido Tinga (2nd from left) and his wife Kate Tinga (3rd from left), George Yang, MC Home Depot chair of the board, (5th from left), Norman Livingstone, executive vice president for Southeast Asia of American Standard (4th from right) and Tom Siebert, chief executive officer of American Standard (2nd from right).

Diners Club's dual currency billing feature

WHEN you are traveling and use your credit card abroad, the last thing you would like to do is have to worry over whether your credit card company will bill you in dollars or Philippine pesos. When you are pressed for time, which is what you are when traveling on business or when you have to buy that precious wedding gift for your wife, you would like to feel that "money is no object".

Diners Club helps you get that feeling. Through its dual currency billing system, Diners Club enables you to settle your bill in pesos or in dollars. Your choice.

"We at Diners Club are proud to be one of the very few credit card companies that offer their cardholders the convenience of dual currency billing. This feature is essential to our target market, who happen to be business executives who frequently travel," said Raffy Simpao, brand manager for Diners Club.

"Owning the decision of paying either in pesos or in dollars is the ultimate financial flexibility Diners Club cardholders can enjoy," Simpao added. "This feature sets Diners Club apart from the rest, committed as always is to what will be convenient for its cardholders."

So when you use your Diners Club card anywhere in the world, quit worrying about how to settle your bills. Thanks to Diners Club's dual currency feature.

SB Cards, a fully owned subsidiary of Security Bank, is the franchise owner and sole issuer of the Diners Club card in the Philippines. For inquiries, call Diners Club 24-hour club phone at 887-9188 or email dinersclub@sbcards.com.ph.

TOTAL IS MANILA'S OUTSTANDING TAXPAYER

Total (Philippines) Corporation was given a special recognition as one of Manila's outstanding taxpayers for 2002 during the 432nd Araw ng Maynila ceremonies held recently. The oil company is among the top 20 companies recognized for their contribution to the city's urban renewal program called 'Buhayin ang Maynila.' In photo are (from left): Manila's sixth district councilor Cita Astals, Mayor Lito Atienza and Total vice-president for operations Chito Poblete receiving the citation.

Picpa speakers at 13th AFA Conference

THE PHILIPPINE Institute of CPAs (Picpa) contributed three technical speakers and a session chair during the 13th AFA Conference held in Bangkok last Oct. 10 to 11.

Picpa national president Crisanto Castro Jr. reported that there were 1,500 delegates to the biennial AFA Conference which coincided with the 18th National Conference of Thai Accountants - held at the Bangkok Convention Center.

Mercedes Suleik - chair of the SEC accreditation committee talked on how to promote "Corporate Governance in Asean". There were other speakers from Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

SGV vice-chair and deputy managing partner Dave Balangue spoke during the session for "Accounting Support for SMEs". He was assisted by technical presentors from developing countries - Cambodia and Vietnam.

The final session saw CPA-lawyer Rosario Bernaldo delving on "Accountants in the Future". Also talking on the subject were speakers from Indonesia, Singapore and Australia.

The technical session on "Enhancing Public Confidence in the Auditing Profession" was chaired by past AFA and Picpa national president Antonio Acyatan. He coordinated and suggested the presentation of the speakers from Australia, Cambodia, Singapore and Thailand.

The participation of the Filipino CPAs in the AFA Conference was coordinated by Picpa president Castro Jr. (and) executive director Horace Dumlao and lawyer Antonio Acyatan - chair of international relations committee.

BANCNET, MASTERCARD AND MONDEX INK AGREEMENT

BancNet Inc, MasterCard International Inc, Mondex Asia Pte Ltd, and Mondex Philippines Inc recently signed an agreement that will pave the way for the introduction and utilization of EMV compliant card payment applications in the country. EMV is the global standard for credit and debit applications for chip cards. Present during the signing were (from left): Messrs. Ricardo Chua and Angelito Villanueva of Bancnet, senior officers of BancNet member banks China Bank and Metrobank, respectively; Jose Benjamin Fernandez of Mondex Phils, Shuan Ghaidan of Mondex Asia, and Jose Rene Villa-Real of MasterCard International.

CHOKULIT WINS IN PASIKLA-BAND

Chokulit band of the STI Quezon Ave. won the 5th Goldilocks Foodshop Pasikla-Band 2003 held on Nov. 15 at SM Fairview. The young band will join the Pasikla-Band grand finals on Dec. 13, (Saturday) 4 p.m. at Sta. Lucia East. Admission is free so everybody is invited to watch the band showdown and jam with Nina, Rafael Rosel, Ruby and Raffy Rodriguez. Photo shows: (seated) Chokulit bass guitarist A. Gie and (standing from left) AB Communications MSD-account director Earl Navarro, the rest of the Chokulit band members: Lindobrand, Chiko, Jeff, Goldilocks Foodshop marketing officer Gary Asajar and AB Communications account assistant Ethel Diño.

CIBELES INSURANCE APPOINTS METROBANK AS TRUSTEE

Metrobank was appointed trustee of the Cibeles Insurance Corp Employees Retirement Fund in signing ceremonies held recently. Cibeles is one of the leading non-life insurance companies in the Philippines today. The signatories were (seated, from left) Metrobank assistant vice president Josephine Cervero, executive vice president and trust officer Josefina Sulit, Cibeles president and COO Ruffy Ko Pio and executive vice president Roderick Ko Pio.

GRUPONG ATELIER SETS 3RD ART EXHIBIT

'Art in Motion' is the theme of the 3rd Art Exhibit of Grupong Atelier, a group of artists who graduated from UST College of Fine Arts. Their latest art collection captures the mystic beauty of various historical spots in canvass. Often taken for granted, Grupong Atelier brings the intimate moods of this places in motion with its variety of color and textures in their arts. Members of Grupong Atelier are (from left) Jossie Abella, Trio Tamayo, Noel Escultura, Romy Salao, Hermie del Rosario, India de la Cruz, Dodie Santos Viola-Faustino and Chiney Carpio. Grupong Atelier 3rd Exhibit runs from Dec. 13 to Jan. 4 at Galeria de las Islas in Calle Real del Palacio, Intramuros Manila.

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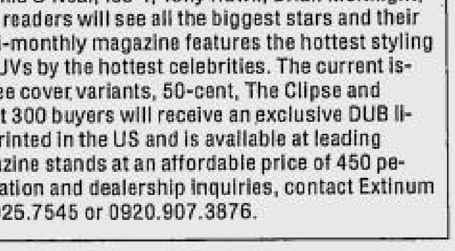

DUB -- the premiere automotive lifestyle magazine in the US comes to the local market. DUB is the magazine where car and driver meets The source. If you are interested in the hottest rides and the celebrities who drive them, you have come to the right place. From the worlds of music, sports and film, including Shaquille O'Neal, Ice-T, Tony Hawk, Brian McKnight, and many more, DUB readers will see all the biggest stars and their luxurious cars. The bi-monthly magazine features the hottest styling trends for cars and SUVs by the hottest celebrities. The current issue, #15 features three cover variants, 50-cent, The Clipse and Method Man. The first 300 buyers will receive an exclusive DUB license plate. DUB is printed in the US and is available at leading bookstores and magazine stands at an affordable price of 450 pesos. For more information and dealership inquiries, contact Extinum International at (02)925.7545 or 0920.907.3876.

Agppi holds confab

THE ASSOCIATION of Government Psychologists of the Philippines Inc (Agppi) will hold its 12th National Convention on Dec. 4 to 5 at the NBI Gymnasium, Taft Ave., Manila. The theme will be "The Psychology of Politics". For inquiries and further details call 722-5903 or fax at 722-5904.

CAPRICCIO WEDDING AND ENGAGEMENT RINGS

Capriccio wedding rings and engagement rings wins best exhibitor award in design, effectiveness and presentation at Women's World 2003 at World Trade Center. This event culminated in a glamorous fashion show directed by Raul Diaz, a well-known fashion director noted for his flamboyantly chic style. The finale for the show was international Models Amelia Dela Cruz and Jonah Magluto, showcasing Capriccio Fine Jewelry designed by Marisse Gonzales.

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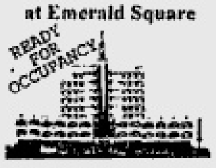

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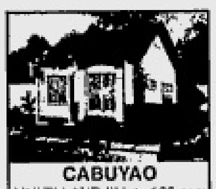

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the Stock Certificates China Banking Corp. No. 11068-V, 7shares & First Metro Investment No. A-14491, 204shares of Ana G. Baro were Lost (PDI-Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4, 2003)

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

RE-INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Housing Authority invites contractors who have completed similar projects costing at least 50% of the proposed contract and accredited with PCAB to bid for the contract listed below:

Contract Package/Location	Approved Budget	PCAB License	Work Description
Land Development of Malabon MRH Project, Malabon	P14.566 Million	"B"/MA for Roads	Land development works including road works, drainage, water and sewerage works

A. Interested contractors are required to secure from the BAC Secretariat Office, 2nd Floor, NHA Main Building, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City the list of basic requirements for registration and eligibility. Only NHA registered contractors shall be allowed to participate in the eligibility screening. Unregistered bidders must register not later than the deadline of submission of letter of intent on December 12, 2003.

B. The schedules of the eligibility screening and bidding activities are as follows:
Issuance of Eligibility Forms – November 28-December 12, 2003
Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Req'ts – December 15, 2003/10:00 A.M.
Issuance of Bid Documents – December 16-23, 2003
Pre-Bid Conference – January 6, 2004/ 10:00 A.M.
Dropping of Bids/Opening of Bids – January 20, 2004 not later than 10:00 A.M.

C. Eligibility requirement forms may be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P200.00 at the NHA-BAC Secretariat Office. The Secretariat may be contacted at Tel. Nos. 929-60-16 and 928-45-61/65 local 262.

D. Bid documents shall be issued to eligible bidders only upon payment of non-refundable fee of P2,500.00.

E. Bid security/deposits shall be in the form of cash, manager's or cashier's check only.

F The provisions of the IRR of RA 9184 shall govern all particulars relative to registration, eligibility screening, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract.

G. NHA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive formally any minor defect thereon, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) JOSEPH PETER S. SISON
Assistant General Manager
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – Nov. 27 & Dec. 4, 2003)

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An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT

MESSAGE OF THANKS

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

REQUIEMS

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"Pour out heart before Him;
God is refuge for us."
Psalm 62:8

AMELITA RAYALA PINPIN

September 30, 1938 - December 01, 2003

Loving husband **Pabling**; sisters **Minvi** and **Yet-Yet**; in-laws **Ed** and **Tess**; children and in-law **Joy** and **Nonette**, **Gee**; grandchildren **Jam-Jam**, **Patrick**, **Kaye**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Imperial Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 06, 2003 at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after 1:00 p.m. Mass (Imperial Chapel).

So Dearly Loved...
So Fondly Remembered...
So Truly Missed...

On the 5th Death Anniversary
of the late

LUIS "JOJO" M. MIRASOL, JR.

who passed away December 4, 1998

His wife & children ask the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul. Masses will be offered at St. Jerome & Sta. Susana Church at 6:00 a.m. & St. James Parish on Ayala, Alabang at 6:30 p.m. on December 4, 2003.

FLORDELIZA CABUNGCAL FALLER

of Lucena City and Lucban, Quezon
peacefully joined her Creator
on December 2, 2003 at the age of 72.

Her loving husband **RODOLFO**; son **LEONARD**; daughter **MADES**; children-in-law **MYLA LAGDAMEO** and **DICKY SALAZAR**; grandchildren **KATRINA**, **MADELENE** and **MARGARET** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Holy Rosary Chapel, Lucena Cathedral, Lucena City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 6, 2003 at the St. Louis Memorial Park, Lucban, Quezon after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Lucena Cathedral.

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
John 14:6

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KALAW : **528-0213, 527-3342**
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Message of Appreciation

from the family of

EDGARDO MARCOS DE VERA

Partner, **Quisumbing Torres**
April 9, 1954 - November 17, 2003

We would like to extend our profound gratitude most especially to the Partners, Associates and Staff of Quisumbing Torres who kept vigil and who took care of all our needs.

To our relatives and friends who were always by our side.

To Ed's classmates and friends and teachers in SPCB, La Salle, and Ateneo Law.

Thank you also to the Principal, teachers, classmates and co-parents of the Paref Schools (Woodrose, Southridge and Rosemont) for the prayers and for giving guidance and strength to our children.

To those who sent flowers, mass cards, who attended the services and funeral rites and to those up to now are continuously comforting us in this time of grief.

Thank you very, very much.

Please continue praying for Ed's soul.

To Ed, we miss you and love you very much.

May God bless your soul and give you everlasting happiness with the Lord.

Your wife **Liza** and children **Isha**, **Iggy** and **Inya**

Affectionately Remembering
On the First Anniversary of the Death
of our Dearly Beloved

ROSITA BORJA SANTARINA, M.D., F.P.P.S.

UST Medicine Class 1953

of Cabanatuan City and Concepcion, Tarlac
(September 4, 1928 – December 4, 2002)

"My soul, be at rest in God alone from whom comes my hope." Psalm 62:6

In appreciation to God for the life she lived and the many blessings the Lord has showered on her, her loving husband **Dr. Lorenzo G. Santarina Jr.** and family is offering Holy Mass at the St. Nicholas de Tolentine Crypt, Lakewood City today, December 4, 2003, at 8:00 a.m. with relatives and friends. A reception will follow at the Crypt, Lakewood City.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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People, Events & Products

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

The importance of macronutrients

LIKE a car, our body needs fuel to action. The food we eat every day must supply enough energy to support growth and development, maintain the basic functions for life, and repair any damage caused by illness or injury.

There's more to a healthy diet than the vitamins and minerals we see in commercials all the time. While we hear a lot about these so-called 'micronutrients,' the body's main fuels are carbohydrates, proteins and fats – which are collectively known as macronutrients, known as such because they are needed in large quantities by the body. Macronutrients provide the body with energy, while micronutrients are also important for its healthy functioning.

The first kind of macronutrient, carbohydrates, provide all the cells in your body the energy they need, they are the primary source of energy in our diet, they also play an important role in the structure and function of the body organs and nerve cells. When you eat foods with carbohydrates in them, your body breaks them down into glucose, which the body uses as fuel.

There are two kinds of carbohydrates: simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates are sugars. They are easily broken down by the body and are found in candy, soda and other sweet foods. Complex carbohydrates, or starches, are pleasant to the taste buds but not sweet, provide a more gradual release of energy because they take longer for the body to process. Complex carbohydrates are better than simple carbohydrates when you are exercising or performing strenuous work over a long period. These are found in foods like bread, rice and noodles.

Carbohydrates are the most important macronutrient and the body needs a large amount of it every day, as the body uses it up the fastest. Proteins build up, keep up, and replace the tissues in your body. Your muscles, your organs, even some of your hormones are made up mostly of protein. Proteins can be found in meat, fish, eggs, nuts and dairy products like milk, cheese and yogurt.

Fat is the body's main form of energy storage. It insulates our bodies from the cold, provides some cushioning for our organs, and is the energy reserve of the body. They are necessary for the storage and transport of vitamins A, D, E and K.

In this day and age, it is important to choose foods that provide these macronutrients and micronutrients. Eating on instant noodles is a convenient way to satisfy your macronutrient requirement, particularly carbohydrates. Some brands even have added nutrients (like those with Sangkap Pinoy Seal awarded by DOH to food products fortified with micronutrients such as vitamin A, iron and iodine).

With proper, balanced and varied diet full of macronutrients and micronutrients, we can ensure that our bodies are healthy and have the energy to get through the day.

DM WENCESLAO ASSOCIATES, PILIPINAS SHELL SIGN AGREEMENT

D.M. Wenceslao Assoc. Inc has signed an agreement with Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp to be its anchor tenant in its new project, The Shell Powerstation. The Shell Powerstation, located along President Diosdado Macapagal Avenue, Aseana Business Park, is positioned to be the premium transport stopover for South Residing Professionals. Established Food and Beverage Locators are envisioned to comprise the bulk of space at the Shell Powerstation. Inset (L-R) Jojo Sio, Shell network planner, Sam de Guzman, retail network manager - Shell, Delfin J. Wenceslao, chair - D.M. Wenceslao and Assoc. Inc, lawyer Kathleen Angcanan, David Holden, GM - Shell retail network, Edwin Wenceslao, Delfin C. Wenceslao. For inquiries on retail spaces, please contact Jonas Rivera at 631-8716, 0927-4704526 or Lody Paule at 0919-8473679.

Vacation Hits, Club Leisure fusion to boost Philippine tourism

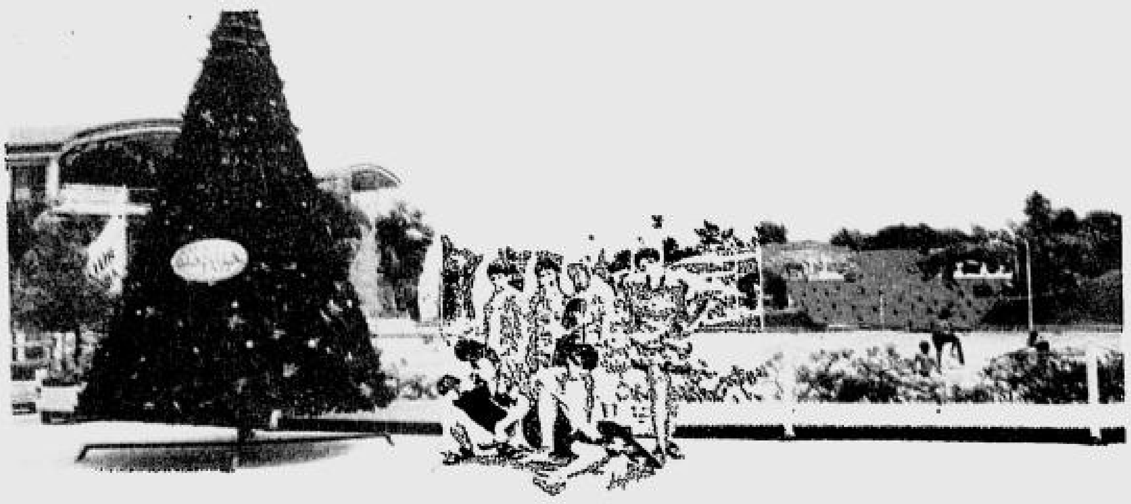
PHILIPPINE tourism is getting a big boost as Canada's Vacation Hits Marketing Inc. (VHMI) expressed its desire to enlist the country as one of its international Six Suns Vacation Tropical Destinations.

The executive management of Vacation Hits decided to come and forge strategic alliance with local Club Leisure Management Corp (CLMC). VHMI president Craig Peloquin will be joined this week by his chair and vice president for sales and marketing, Leo Peloquin and Jana Walker, respectively.

Peloquin's Vacation Hits will set the groundwork for a 'fusion' of important tourism partnerships with Tito Avancena's Club Leisure Management Corp. CLMC manages Camp John Hay Manor and Golf Club, Sherwood Golf and Country Club, Manila Southwoods Manor and Sports Club and affiliate properties of Southwoods Golf and Country Club and Fairways and Bluewaters (Boracay).

Vacation Hit's Six Suns Vacation Tropical Gateways brings you and your companion to one of exotic locations in the Mexican Riviera (Cancun, Puerto Vallarta, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, and Acapulco) and Dominican Republic (Puerto Plata). The $500-package provides a 5-day, 4-night hotel accommodation in these nature-set, culture-rich tourist destinations.

Vacation Hits Marketing Inc is a wholly owned subsidiary of Odenza Marketing Group Inc. Odenza is a vacation incentive company with offices in San Diego, California, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. It is successfully offering vacation certificates to companies throughout North America for the past six years. Its market: multinational companies that provide employee incentives, customer purchase incentives, traffic generators and prize giveaways. Its portfolio includes large quantities of vacation certificates at greatly discounted wholesale tourism packages.



PASKONG PASKO SA CLUB MANILA EAST '03

Club Manila East invites everyone to their Christmas party on Dec. 6 and 7, Saturday and Sunday. Come, join the fun and win lots of prizes. Enterprise cardholders, both principal and extension are entitled to free entrance. Guests and non-cardholders will be given 50 percent discount on entrance. For more information, call 660-2801 to 04/660-2805/685-2065/ 658-0458 loc. 303.

SPA'S 2ND YEAR CELEBRATION

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo received a plaque of appreciation from Samahan ng Personero sa Aduana (SPA) chair Freddie Mozo during the 2nd anniversary celebration of SPA at the port of Manila.

VWSEZ 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Held last Sept. 12, at the Mt. Banahaw Building in the VWSEZ Compound in Tala, Barangay Malaria, Caloocan was the anniversary celebration of VWSEZ as a Peza Economic Zone. Shown are (from left) Ramon Abordo (Peza manager of Caloocan), Rodney Dizon (chief finance officer), Lilia De Lima (director general of Peza), Rosalie Dizon (vice chair - board of directors) and Rafael Dizon, Jr. (chair of the board).

Product FILES

Skechers - the choice of an icon

THERE'S no denying Christina Aguilera's prowess. And even harder to ignore would be her unique fashion sense. This young icon admits to a bold, fun and fearless sense of style. She was never one to conform. She likes fashion that pushes things to the edge. And it shows in what she wears, whether it be fun, classic, casual or dressed up. She has always donned her own style even while she was still a kid in school. And today, at 22, she still proudly carries the aura of individuality. When it comes to footwear Christina has chosen Skechers as her alter ego. It's cutting edge designs and trend-setting styles for men, women and children have made it one of the most sought after shoe brands today. Skechers continues to gain popularity in the market. And because this brand is definitely made to last, expect its styles to be setting the latest and hottest trends.

Bits & Clips

Seminars on property management valuation

THE URBAN Institute of Real Estate will conduct a seminar on Property Management and Practical Property Valuation on Dec. 4, 1:30 to 6 p.m. at the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center, Benavidez cor. Trasierra Sts., Legaspi Village, Makati City. To be taken up from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. is "Introduction to Property Management". Then from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., "Practical Property Valuation" will be discussed. For inquiries, Urban Institute may be reached at 6810928 or email urbanet@pacific.net.ph.

Sta. Lucia and Royale Homes Real Estate Fair '03

THE COUNTRY'S leading real estate developer and it's marketing network provide the best investment ideas for the season with great discounts for lot buyers. Tagged as Sta. Lucia and Royale Homes Christmas Real Estate Fair 2003, the event is slated on Dec. 4 and 5, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., to be held at the Megatrade Conference Center of the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong. Lot buyers can enjoy a 20 percent discount on as low as 20 percent downpayment for every lot purchased during the fair. Free seminars will also be conducted. Special prizes will also be given away to lucky guests who will visit the booths.

A different kind of Christmas Bazaar

THIS holiday season, put your shopping gear on and march to the most refreshing and festive bazaar at Market! Market! aptly called "Pasko! Pasko! sa Weekend Market". Open every Friday and Saturday, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Experience a vibrant outdoor holiday shopping where you can find reasonably priced Christmas items only at "Pasko! Pasko! sa Weekend Market". It is located at the grounds of the soon to open Market! Market! across the International School at the Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Ihap celebrates foundation

The Industrial Hygienists Association of the Phils (Ihap) Inc will celebrate its 1st National Annual Convention & Foundation Anniversary on Dec. 4 to 5, at the Bayview Park Hotel, Roxas Boulevard, Manila. This year's convention theme is "Industrial Hygiene: An Emerging Role of an OSHE Professional". For more information, contact Ney Granadillos/Jessie Dela Cruz, Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) at 929-6036 to 39.

NREA holds confab

REAL estate professionals, property developers, urban planners and housing practitioners from Regions I, II, III and the Cordilleras, will converge on Dec. 5 at Hotel Veniz, Baguio City for the first Multi-Region Conference of the National Real Estate Association (NREA). The theme will be "Global Trends: Urban and Regional Development in the 21st Century". To be spearheaded by NREA's chapters in the four regions, the conference aims to promote the development of the growth areas in the regions, particularly their respective industrial, commercial and residential zones. For particulars, contact NREA at 912-3492 or 913-4463.

ORTIGAS HOME AND AUTO DEPOT SOFT OPENING

The newest and biggest home and auto development in the country will soon be open. Ortigas Home and Auto depot, a 5-hec. project located within the Ortigas central business district recently had its soft opening with MMDA chair Bayani Fernando as guest of honor. The home depot section is already leased out while leasing for the auto depot section is still on going. In photo are (from left) Albino Sy, (guest) ; Lawrence Gonzaga, OAD director ; William Gosiaco, OAD director ; Victor Chan, OHD director ; Napoleon Co, OHD president ; MMDA chair Bayani Fernando ; Alfredo Yao, OAD chair; Vicente Chua, OAD president and Edwin Marcelo, project manager.

TCL OPENS FACILITY IN PASIG CITY

the CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

In line with its vision of supporting the total development of the Filipino youth, The Children's Library (TCL) a multi-media learning center of the Gokongwei Brothers Foundation, inked a deed of donation with Pasig City for the opening of a TCL corner at the Pasig City Library Learning Center Resource Center. In photo: (from left, sitting) Pasig City head librarian Ma. Theresita Osorio, Mayor Soledad Eusebio, and TCL managing director Joan Cosico. Standing (from left) 'Booklat', TCL's mascot and TCL operations manager Noreena Ricafort. A project of the Gokongwie Brothers Foundation, TCL has recently expanded its reach to make its facilities accessible to more children in the metropolis.

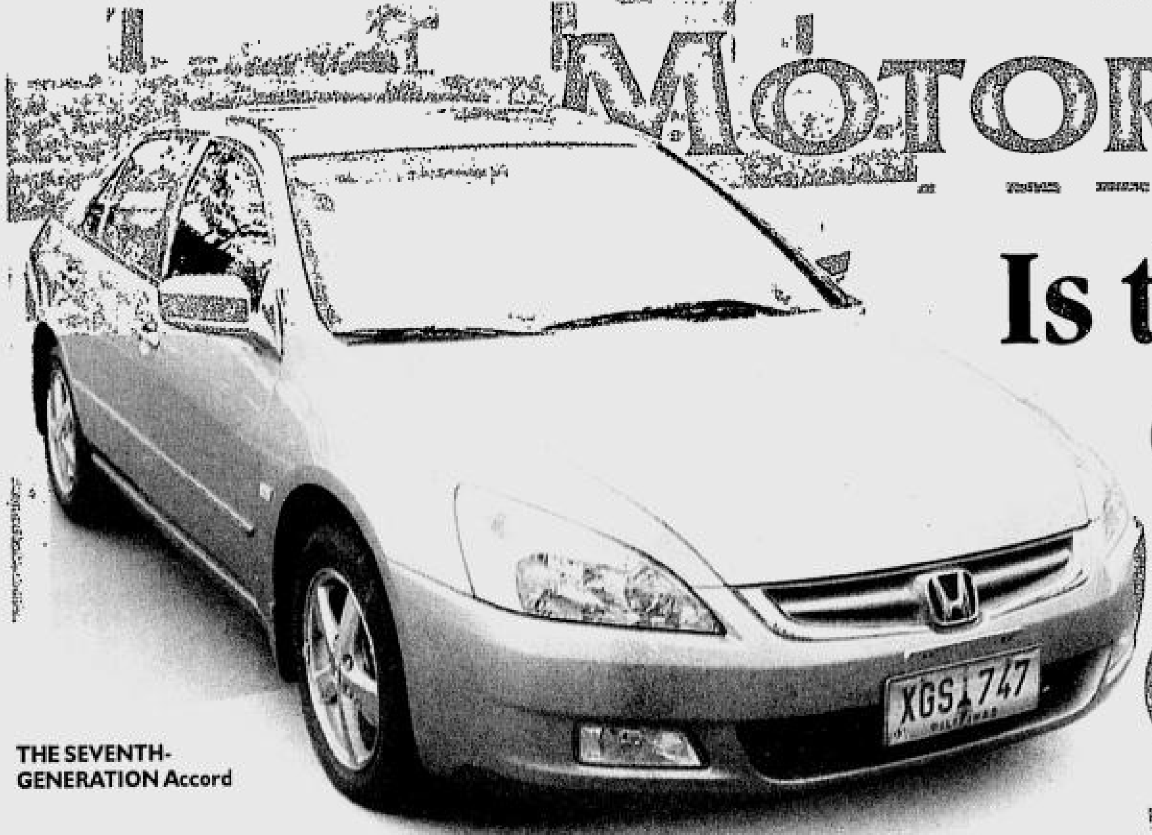
ROBINSONS LAND APPOINTS DAVIES ENERGY AS POWER CONSULTANTS

Robinsons Land recently contracted the services of Davies Energy Systems Inc to design and install cutting edge technologies to optimize their electrical distribution system, which guaranteed results. Shown at the signing ceremony are Red Santos (CFO - Davies Energy), Jimmy Seno (general manager - Davies Energy), Nonoy Colayco (director-Davies Energy), Frederick Go (EVP-Robinsons Land), Nilo Mapa (general manager - Robinsons Land commercial centers), Bert Lozada (engineer director - Robinsons Land), Tony Mendiola (sales and marketing head - Davies Energy). Davies Energy designs and installs solutions to reduce electrical and fuel costs for industrial and commercial clients. They can be contacted by email at info@daviesenergysys.com or at 843-6011.

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph

MOTORING

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**



THE SEVENTH-GENERATION Accord

Is the Filipino employers' favorite car worth it?

Text by Tessa R. Salazar
Photos by Alex P. Loinaz

IS it worth it? Lemme work it. Put my thang down, flip it and reverse it..."

This line from the rap song of Missy Elliott would best describe our feelings for Honda's new Accord.

The Accord is hyped up as the most frequent car make provided by companies to their top management (CEOs/country manager or general manager), followed by Nissan Cefiro and Mercedes-Benz. This is based on the third edition of the Car Report Philippines by global consulting firm Watson Wyatt Worldwide based on 200 employers in the country. The good news is that we finally had our hands full on the latest Accord VTi-L a week ago.

For a few days, we put our feet down the gas, flipped open the tech specs, looked under the hood, and dug into our Accord records, from the present back to the past.

The seventh generation Accord looks bent on concentrating on the luxury side, no doubt. The Accord 4-door sedan seems to make it clear that it is targeting executives who cannot afford a Benz—at least here in the Philippines. (It has a two-door sports version not available here.)

It has been said that the Honda Accord has undergone the most dramatic change in its 27-year history. In the midsize class, the Accord has reached a new level of styling, performance and sophistication.

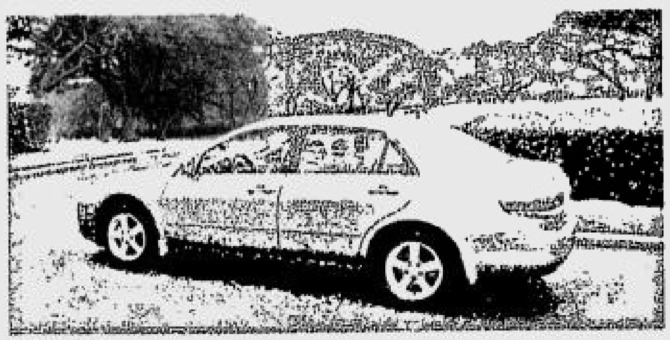
> The Accord is hyped up as the most frequent car make provided by companies to their top management

The best selling car in America in 2001, the Accord is loaded with lots of additional standard equipment, including antilock brakes, a tilt and telescopic steering wheel and 5-speed automatic transmission. It has increased its front interior and rear knee room. It has new larger seats with additional comfort and support, upgraded audio systems, LED instrumentation on all models, dual zone climate controls, sliding center armrest, additional and improved bottle/cup holders.

We tried the top-end VT-i L Accord to get to know what's "real" behind the "deal."

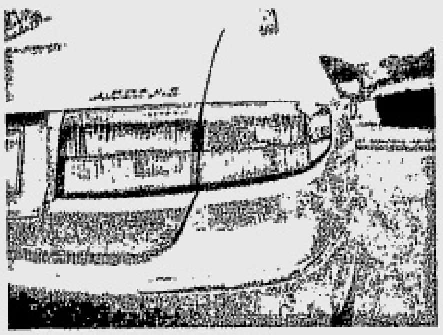
Stronger, more precise

We did some test drives with previous Accord owners, and they did feel some improvements. The steering is precise even at high speeds, and Honda has always been known for such. The braking is also excellent, and doesn't show signs of fishtailing.



SIDE view

LUMINOUS meter cluster for important gauges



LOVE it or hate it taillight

The power has evidently gone stronger for the new Accord, it had been observed. The shift points had been adjusted. The transmission was smoother compared to the older generation Accords; the engine's response, more immediate.

Technology has also made possible the link to intelligent Grade Logic Control that enhances the feel of driving, reduces "gear hunting" on uphill runs, improves engine braking downhill and enhances general acceleration. Improvements have also been made to the four-wheel double wishbone system with five link rear suspension for better handling, rigidity and stability.

The older generation Accord's transmission responded more slowly. This seventh generation's five-speed automatic transmission accelerated more swiftly while consuming less fuel.

The car's sound insulation is expected in a luxury car, though some degree of tire noise could be heard, though it was not bothersome, and we were well aware that noise is a result of the road condition and the kind of tires used.

The "neck shock mitigation seat" is complemented by a dual SRS airbag system. For the Vti-L, there are additional side airbags, and load limiters reduce pressure on the chest during airbag deployment.

Long-lasting belts

Inside the engine, we could see that one single belt ran everything. The single fan belt drove the alternator, power steering pump and air-con compressor, and had an automatic adjusting belt tensioner. One auto technologist remarked that these belts could last as long as the car's running life itself.

The longevity may stem from the fact that the belt is now wider than before. Yet, the belt is still subject for inspection every 40,000 km, and depending on its condition, it could be replaced. Single fan belts, it has been said, are more reliable and efficient.

The engine support is impressive. To reduce vibration, the engine mounts are computer-

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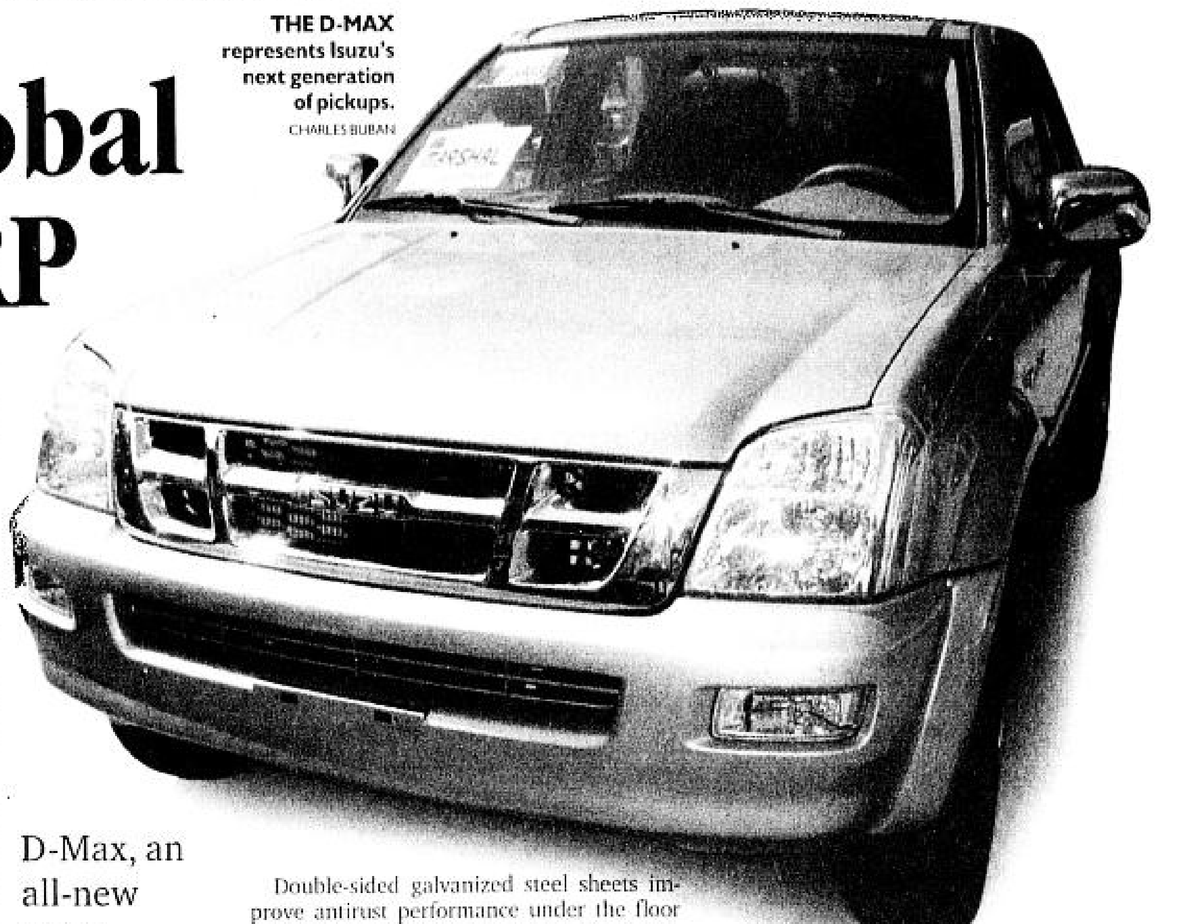
Isuzu's global pickup now in RP



THE D-MAX represents Isuzu's next generation of pickups.
CHARLES BUBAN

By Charles E. Buban

ISUZU Philippines Corp.'s (IPC) recent introduction of an all-new line of pickup model, the D-Max, represents a new strategy for the Isuzu's operation worldwide.

This is because, while D-Max brand may be Japanese, the all-new pickup was assembled at General Motors (Thailand) Ltd. and is now distributed by Isuzu Operations (Thailand) Co. Ltd., a joint venture of Mitsubishi Corp. and Isuzu Motors Ltd.

Indeed, the D-Max is a product of various partnerships aimed at coming up with a vehicle lineup that is world class but at the same time tailored to the needs of its local market.

"(The D-Max) consolidates Isuzu's global vision and regional infrastructure," announced IPC president Toru Koyasu, during the pickup's recent launch in Libis, Quezon City.

Finally here

And so, the pickup that has sold 200,000 units in Thailand has finally arrived in the country.

"Isuzu has established its position as the leader in diesel technology and the D-Max is sure to be a source of great pride for the owners of this vehicle," said Koyasu.

The D-Max will be sold here at various prices: P920,000 for the 4x2 manual, P975,000 for the 4x2 automatic, P1.255 million for the 4x4 manual, and P1.31 million for the 4x4 automatic variant.

Fuel-efficient engine

The D-Max is powered by a 3-liter direct injection (which computer controlled system) turbo intercooler diesel engine that gives this new generation of Isuzu pickup its fuel efficiency, power, silent operation and eco-friendly feature.

"The power within the D-Maxmakes it a highly practical vehicle suited to many commercial uses," describes IPC assistant department manager Myrna Gonzales.

The pickup promises a smoother ride, thanks to its Intelligent Riding System—consisting of a double wishbone front suspension, rack and pinion steering system—that gives the D-Max superb grip and stable performance on rough terrain.

D-Max's 4x4 version is made even more roadworthy with its limited slip differential, transfer case protector and convenient shift-on-the-fly drive system transfer control buttons.

The D-Max is positioned as a pickup for active lifestyles.

With its highly rigid body, it sets a new standard for durability. Optimally arranged basic frame members and enlarged side panel members offer increased durability and safety.

> D-Max, an all-new Isuzu pickup, will be marketed in more than 130 countries

Double-sided galvanized steel sheets improve antirust performance under the floor and in other key areas. The side-door beams, front bumper and chassis frame are reinforced for enhanced cabin safety.

Chassis frame thickness and configuration are selectively optimized, with the frame's front and rear sections designed to absorb more impact, and the center section reinforced for greater resistance to impact.

The D-Max's fluid aerodynamic body is adorned with a short nose front bumper; chrome radiator grille; large multireflector headlamps and foglamps; chrome-accented door handles and side mirrors; solidly linear alloy wheels; muscular fender flares; vertical-type clear combination tail lamps; and high mount stop lamp.

Spacious cabin

Complementing this luxurious array of body attractions is its functional and elegant interiors strategically built inside a spacious cabin to provide more legroom and headroom.

The extremely spacious cabin is comparable to the roomy comfort of a high-grade saloon.

Reduced wind noise also enhances enjoyment of the D-Max interior.

The new instrument panel is distinguished by a futuristic design, with gauges, controls, digital clock and other frequently used items placed optimally for better visibility and easier operation.

Operability is also enhanced with dial controls for the air condition and a simple push-button for switching between 2WD and 4WD.

Six colors are available. These are alpine white, astral silver metallic, sandalwood metallic, cape blue metallic, foxfire red mica and chamonix green metallic.

A hit in Thailand

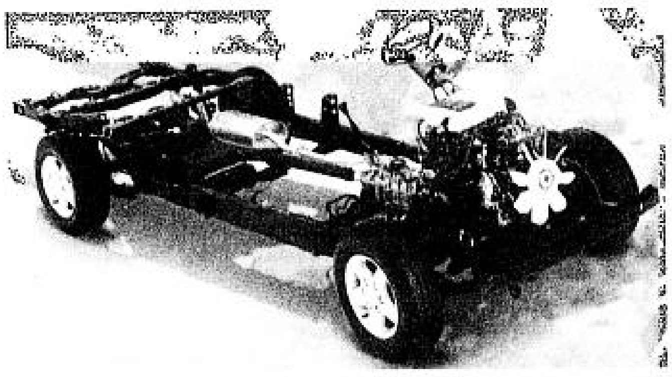
"For 20 consecutive years, Isuzu in Thailand has been able to maintain its No. 1 status in the commercial vehicle market, with a huge pickup market second only to that in the United States," reported Isuzu Operations Thailand EVP Takeshi Suzuki.

In fact, Isuzu Thailand enjoyed a leading 37.4 percent share in the kingdom's one-ton pickup truck market in 2002.

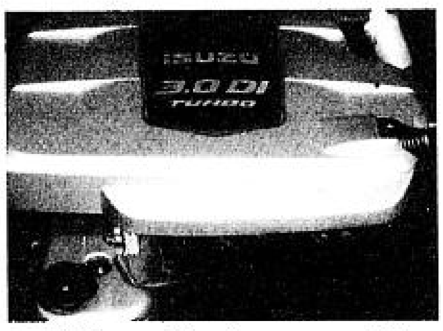
It was for this reason Isuzu has positioned Thailand as the base for its global pickup business.

As part of this strategy, global production of Isuzu pickups has been consolidated in Thailand.

Isuzu and General Motors jointly developed the D-Max as an all-new Isuzu pickup, which will be marketed in more than 130 countries.



RIGID chassis, big frames and substantial cross members give the D-Max unparalleled strength even with heavy loads.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D-MAX'S powerful engine generates 130 horses, the most powerful, fuel efficient, silent, and eco-friendly in its class.
CHARLES BUBAN

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A car manufacturer's worst nightmare

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

HAVING to recall a motor vehicle because of a safety-related defect is any auto manufacturer's nightmare. The nightmare gets worse when the number of cars affected reaches hundreds of thousands and even millions, such as what happened recently when Nissan Motor Co. announced it would recall 2.5 million cars worldwide for the replacement of defective engine sensors at no cost to the customer.

The recall, the largest in Nissan's 70-year history and the second biggest ever by a car manufacturer in Japan, includes 1.02 million cars in Japan spanning 25 models, 700,000 cars in the United States, 460,000 vehicles in Europe and 370,000 in Asia and other markets. Reuters reported that many popular Nissan cars manufactured between April 1998 and May 2003 are affected, such as the Sentra, Micra (also known as March), Altima, X-Trail, Skyline (known as Infiniti G35 in the US) and the 350Z sportscar.

Defective sensor

According to The Asian Wall Street Journal, the recall covers a large number of vehicles because it stems from a problem with an engine part that Nissan has used on a wide variety of models during the past five years. The defective part is a crank-angle sensor that helps keep the engine running smoothly. "The (recall) campaign is related to the engine angle and position sensors of the engine management system, which could potentially fail in case of a solder defect within the internal circuit," Nissan Customer Service informed Nissan owners in the United Kingdom. "The condition could cause the engine to stall and/or make it not possible to start." Fortunately, there have been no reports of accidents caused by the problem.

After reading the news, I waited to see how Nissan's Philippine representatives would deal with their principal's worst nightmare. On Oct. 31, at 11:57 a.m., I received an e-mail from Elizabeth H. Lee, senior vice president for marketing of Universal Motors Corp. (UMC), distributor of Nissan Frontier, Patrol, Urvan and Terrano. Ms Lee said that based on the information UMC gathered from Nissan Japan, the engines affected are the QG, QR, VQ, VX and CR engines used in Passenger Cars (PC) or PC-based only. Since UMC assembles and distributes only light commercial vehicles (LCVs), not PC, none of the vehicles sold by UMC are affected by the recall, Ms Lee stressed. As to whether Nissan passenger cars sold in the Philippines are affected by the recall, she declared: "That can be best answered by NMPI."

Not included

NMPI is Nissan Motor Philippines, Inc., so I promptly called up Raymond Gregory Tribdino of NMPI for their official statement on the recall issue. At 6:58 p.m. of the same day, I received an e-mail from Mr. Tribdino in which NMPI asserted that all variants of the Nissan X-Trail, Cefiro, Sentra GX, Verita and Serena are not included in the recall announced by the Ministry of Land Transportation of Japan. "The recall only affects certain Nissan models in Japan and the global market," NMPI said, further clarifying that the recall announcement, made through the wire services last Oct. 30, covered models made between 1998 and 2002—not up to 2003 as was reported.

"The official word from Nissan Motor Limited (NML), Tokyo headquarters of Nissan specifically states some 25 cross-platform models are involved," NMPI continued. "Moreover, the affected part—a small engine sensor—is also supplied to other car manufacturers as well. NML, through official communications with NMPI said that the extent of the recall covers only about 100,000 units in the global overseas market that includes Southeast Asia, Australia, South Africa, Latin America and the Carribean (sic)."

The big question

On the other hand, the Reuters story datelined Tokyo Oct. 30, 2003 that I earlier cited and news reports from Australia and the United Kingdom all say that the X-Trail is included in the worldwide recall. In Melbourne on Oct. 31, Nissan Australia spokeswoman Lenore Fletcher said more than 10,000 Pulsars and X-Trails were likely to be recalled. "More than one million present model Pulsar sedans and X-Trail four-wheel drives were being taken off the road worldwide," Rosemary Desmond of news.com.au reported on Oct. 31.

In the United Kingdom on Oct. 30, BBC News reported that the safety recall affects the Primera, X-Trail, Almera and Almera Tino models built since 1998. A Nissan spokesman said the company would contact owners of these Nissan models by the end of November. And an e-mail from Nissan Customer Service to the Nissan Primera Owners Club specified that the X-Trails affected by the recall are equipped with engines of the QG and QR series.

So the big question is: are any of the Nissan cars sold in the Philippines powered by QG or QR engines?

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Stop repeat offenders. Don't re-elect them!

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

Cotaocos, Toyota top rally

THE FAMILY of Karl, Joseph and Alex Cotaoco and Hester See scored an upset in the 3rd Dodo Ayuyao Sampaguita Rally held in Rizal and Laguna last Saturday by logging 181 demerits in their own Honda Civic to win first place overall, besting defending champion Tony Mapa's team.

The Cotacos also placed first in the Perfect Laps category with four perfect laps.

The rally has been held every year since 2001 by Automobile Association Philippines (AAP), formerly the Philippine Motor Association, in honor of the late AAP president Conrado "Dodo" R. Ayuyao, who is remembered as the father of Philippine motor sports. Petron was the major sponsor of this year's rally.

AAP president Tony Mapa with son Nikko and AAP director Dave Arcenas as navigators logged 213 demerits in a Vios loaned by Toyota Motor Corp. Philippines (TMPC) to claim runner-up honors in the overall category and second place in the Perfect Laps competition with three Perfect Laps.

The team of Eric Valera, Michael Aurelio and Alberto Gomez Jr., who finished second last year in the overall category, placed third with 227 demerits, in a BMW 5 Series owned by Valera, but third place in Perfect Laps went to the Protégé Tech team of Joel Lago, Ray Reyes and Victor Vitug with two Perfect Laps.

With Mapa placing second in a Vios and the sixth, ninth and tenth place rankings of three other Toyota cars, TMPC captured the trophy in the Manufacturers' Team category with the best logged-in time. TMPC with the cooperation of Toyota dealers fielded a total of eight cars, four of which finished in the top 10.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc., which placed second, entered three vehicles while General Motors Automobiles Philippines Inc. finished third with two Chevrolet Optras and one Aveo.

A manufacturer must field at least three vehicles to qualify for the Manufacturers' Team prize, which was included for the first time in this year's rally.

The team of champion race driver Pocholo Ramirez with Gus Lagman and Ed Castañeda as navigators in a Ford Lynx RS loaned by Ford Group Philippines placed seventh overall.

In the Novice Class, Toyota copped first honors with Ronald Pangilinan at the wheel and Rolando Malig as navigator. The Protégé Tech team of Lago, Reyes and Vitug in a Protégé Tech was runner-up Novice Class while a Toyota with David Asuncion, Michael Rosario and Ryan Lorenzo placed third.

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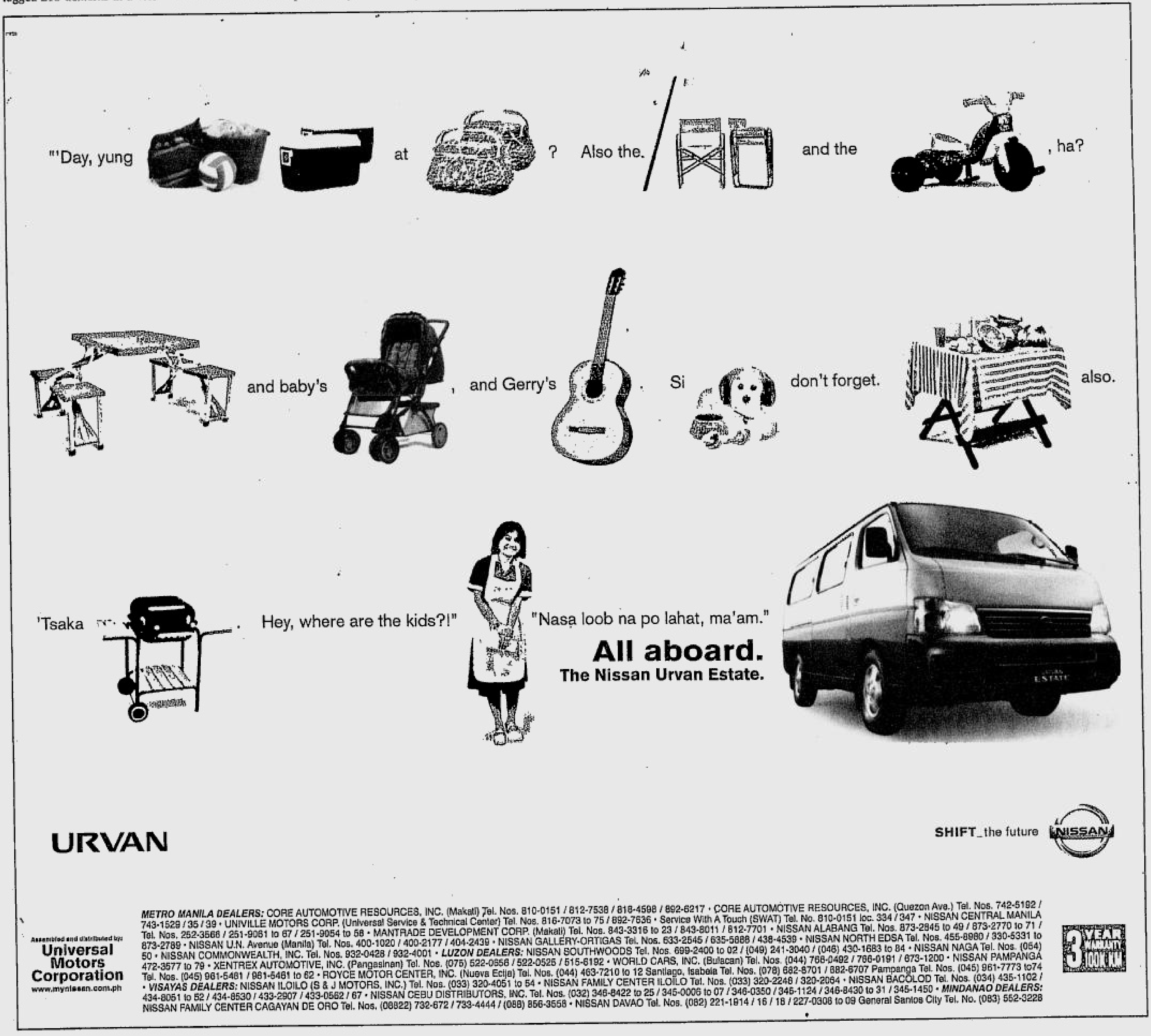

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Taming ‘wild horses’ at the Sierra Madre

THE RANGER XLT is at home in the jungle.

PLUNGING in 30 kph current

Text and photos
by Tessa R. Salazar

UP IN THE SIERRA Madre Mountains, one can still see fearsome Philippine cobras, 22-foot-long pythons, wild boars, deer and eagles. Down in the valleys run crystal clear rivers, and freshwater fish still swim in 30 kph currents.

But if you think only indigenous wildlife can thrive here, think again. The Sierra Madre mountain ranges are becoming the favorite off-road playgrounds of 4x4 and adventure clubs.

The challenging terrain is the come-on, the wildlife is just a bonus. One careless mistake an unlucky driver can find himself and his truck in is somersaulting down a steep ravine.

Great excuse

An off-roader club, Team Extreme Adventure, figured that if it could teach other drivers to negotiate the difficult Sierra Madre, then negotiating almost all other off-road trails in the Philippines would be a cinch. And if it could teach that to the people who planted cell towers in this country's inaccessible places, then never would our mobile phones lose their signals again, wherever we may be.

Now that sounded like a great excuse to go off-roading with the guys who could provide free cell phones. And if they got lost in the woods, a phone for a free ride home, perhaps? Kidding aside, I hitched a ride in such an off-road clinic with a group of driver-trainees of Globe Telecommunications last weekend to Tanay in Rizal province, which was at the waist of the Sierra Madre. The idea made perfect sense; telecommunications people literally go everywhere to make the signal happen. Team Extreme Adventure captured the exact niche market to share its expertise.

Jump-off

The jump-off in Tanay was about 60 km from the nearest Globe payment center in Metro Manila. Before embarking on what would eventually be the most brain-rattling ride of my life, instructors Beeboy Bargas and Kits Aragon (this name reminds me of LOTR's Aragorn, perfect for the circumstance) warned me that the Ford Ranger Pinatubo conquest we did about two years ago would be a walk in the park compared to the trail ahead. I suddenly found myself struggling to remember if I signed my insurance policy in the office, and I had the crazy notion that the policy did not include freak accidents such as death caused by occupant's vehicle turning turtle and being swallowed whole by a hungry python.

When the wheels started rolling and the Ford Ranger 4x4s lurched forward, however, there was no turning back (literally, because the trail was too narrow). We soon found ourselves in very unnatural and off-camber angles, just imagine ascending or descending 35 degrees.

Entirely different skills

Off-road driving involves entirely different skills from highway or circuit driving. Like a box of chocolates, as Forrest Gump said, you never know what you're getting next. The trail may be slippery on a steep ascent and suddenly become rocky and bone-jarring on the descent at the other side. Or it could be the other way around, or slippery or rocky all throughout. And while you're negotiating the trail, deep ravines on either side threaten to swallow you and your beast of burden in oblivion.

Team Extreme Adventure Motorsports made it clear that when coming down slippery trails, locking on the brakes would result in a slide, which would be dangerous as it would mean a loss of control for the driver. The way out of a slide would be to step on the accelerator mildly and to steer the car in the direction of the slip, and hope for the best.

Elevated point

The high point of my test run was toward an elevated point through a narrow trail. The killer there was the steep climb (we were already nearly facing the sky) and the equally steep drop-off at the other side—so steep that we wouldn't see the road we would be running down on.

This was where your trust in your navigator was really gauged. In this case, I trusted Kits that he wouldn't let us jump off a cliff at the end of that climb. Kits asked me not to hesitate and just keep going, and I did. If we had stopped in mid-climb, we would have slipped to either side of the trail, and that would have meant disaster.

“Off-road driving is like Zen. You have to unlearn all those things you've picked up in street driving. The off-road develops new driving habits,” Kits said.

But the test wasn't over. This time, I was to drive over that again, from the other side. I was given specific instructions: never let your rpm run below 2,000, don't go more than first gear, and just go on and on and never stop.

The ascent was a palm-sweating 35 degrees. I felt like a pilot, and my airplane was taking off, only this time we were taking off around a hundred times slower.

I guess I passed this test with flying colors, because I did not stall, and Kits said “Do you know how many guys got stuck there a few minutes ago?”

“Ni hindi nga ako pinawisan, eh. (I didn't even break a sweat).” Oops, secret! Of course, the exercise unnerved me. I was none the worse for wear, in fact, as I limped back to the office with a headache and my body aching all over.

Off-road driving is like Zen. You have to unlearn all those things you've picked up in street driving. The off-road develops new driving habits

River crossing

The highlight of the course was the river crossing. It was a river more suited for whitewater rafting, with currents at an angry 30 kph. Still wobbly from my earlier drive, I obliged to take pictures of the Rangers crossing the rivers.

The Rangers bobbed down and up the river, riding the boulders and current, like dolphins on a slow cruise in the open seas. Climbing up the other side, they seemed to shake off water from their bodies like zebras or buffaloes going their usual way.

I went home bringing with me a brand-new cell phone (I wish!)—no, rolls and rolls of film documenting an adventure only a few can experience. Well, maybe if you're from Globe or Smart you will one of these days, better stretch those arm and leg muscles.

Learn, unlearn

There were a number of helpful pointers I learned during the run myself. No, I wasn't taught how to erect a cell tower, naughty you. Here were some of the more important tips:

- I was reminded not to grip the steering wheel with my thumbs out because I might injure my thumbs during hard turning maneuvers.
- I was asked to keep my foot off the clutch, except when shifting. We were using the 4-wheel low gear all the time.
- On downhill runs (or crawls) we used compression or engine brakes. I was asked to remain on first gear on the slippery part of the trail.

Team Extreme Adventure has also literally made inroads to isolated communities in Sierra Madre. In one such trek, the team was able to bring in medicines from the city and conduct a medical mission to the 5,000 inhabitants of Tatawiran, a village on top of the Sierra Madre.

‘Rumble in the Jungle’

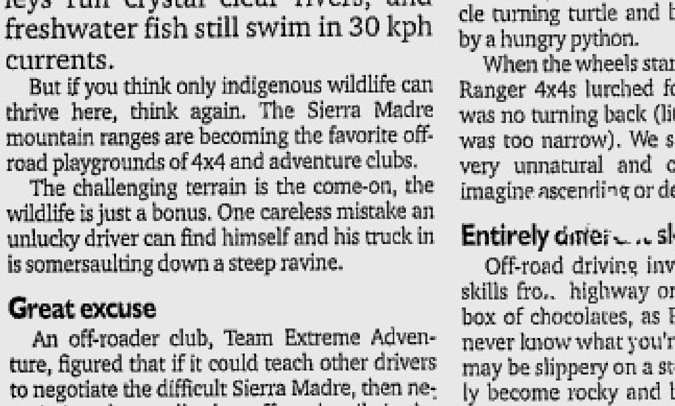
On a more competitive note, the team is planning a 34-hour nonstop 4x4 adventure called “Rumble in the Jungle” on the Sierra Madre. “Rumble in the Jungle,” Biboy and Kits said, would not alter the Sierra Madre's ecosystem as they stressed the importance of respecting nature and its inhabitants.

“This clinic is the first of its kind in the country, that a manufacturer would provide this kind of service to a client. But if you look back in the '80s, this kind of service had been provided by other manufacturers abroad,” said Biboy Bargas.

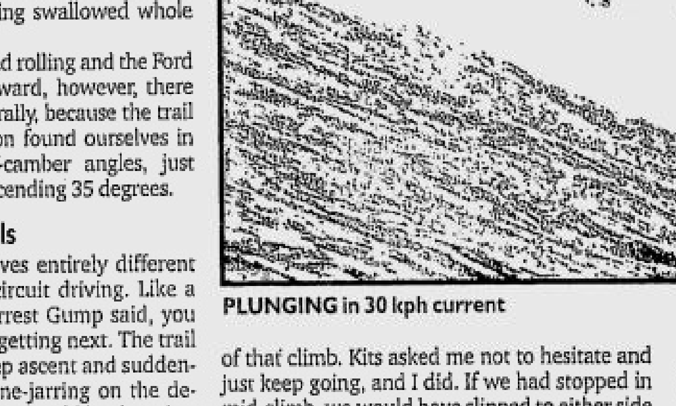
Team Extreme Adventure sees to it that it doesn't alter the forest environment more than it has to. The trails are followed strictly, and no further off-road “adventurism” is allowed.

As for the Ford Ranger, it successfully displayed more than enough power in extreme degrees of off-roading. Power that translates to trust, the most important value an owner can bestow upon a vehicle.

Too bad we didn't see any wild boar, pythons or cobras. Maybe they were watching us.



BIG Foot's adventure in Tanay



THAT familiar Ranger Pinatubo edition

Is the Filipino employers’ favorite car worth it?

From page C1

ized. The computer decides what type of mount to use, depending on the rpm range. Low rpm requires softer mounts, while high rpm requires harder ones.

The technical term for this, says Honda Tech guy Noel Umpad, is the “Engine Mounting Control Solenoid Valve” and it is controlled or regulated by the “Power Train Control Module.” The new engine mount and rear floating subframe systems reduce vibration.

Instead of using just one cross bar, you would see two bars on each side. These are meant to reduce obstructions during maintenance checks.

The front of the car does look like an S2000. The fenders arch elegantly on the sides. Others say the façade tries hard to look like a Jaguar. The tail looks sexy except for those taillights, which we nearly mistook for a Hyundai. (But what's wrong with a Hyundai? This is a Honda, duh!)

Like wall clocks

The tachometer, speedometer, fuel and temperature gauges are all displayed so large, they look like wall clocks. You will either love it or hate it. One thing's for sure, there's no excuse for running out of gas or overspeeding. Don't say you weren't warned.

The three important gauges are illuminated constantly via the luminous meter cluster. The moment the driver opens the door, the lights for these gauges are on instantly. But some things have to give, and if that illumination dies out on you, you've got nothing but a big, black hole gaping behind your steering wheel. So you have to ask, what is the lifespan of that luminous thingy? Can't we just turn that off during the day to save energy and save that for the night? Maybe the progressive lighting levels would do the trick.

The interior color combination is basic with tones of black, gray and light brown. This looks smart and light. The color of the wood grain for the Vti-L model has been a bit overdone, though.

There are separate thermostat adjustments for the driver and front passenger. The heater works well—though we doubt owners would ever get to use it other than when they're up in Baguio.

The turn knobs for the aircon and radio look plain and simple. Again, it's a love-it-or-hate-it thing. In our case, we looked at it with disdain. Why didn't Accord go for the digital control? Well, maybe knobs would be easier to grab and switch in the dark.

But all else aside, everything about the audio is easy to understand and operate. No need to bend under your seat or open your trunk to put your six favorite CDs in. Your CDs (Missy's included) could be inserted up front, through one slit via the push of a load button. Neat.

And this one observation we don't know yet if Honda should take as a naughty critique or a compliment: the new Accord looks just like a big Civic.

See, if you're a big fan of the Civic, it feels nice to have a “big brother” option, don't you think? But if you feel the Accord does not “stoop” down any level, then that is a big slight.

It is undeniable, however, that the Accord is the heavier car, and has a longer wheelbase. Thus, riding in an Accord is more comfortable. Its interior design is more elegant. The Accord has more body, and thus more space. You won't feel cramped, either driving or riding in the Accord.

Let's put it this way, the Civic is the studio apartment, the Accord is the house and lot.

Verdict: At P1.2 million, Don Jose can have the perfect everyday luxury car. And let Mang Metring turn those darn aircon and radio knobs all he wants.

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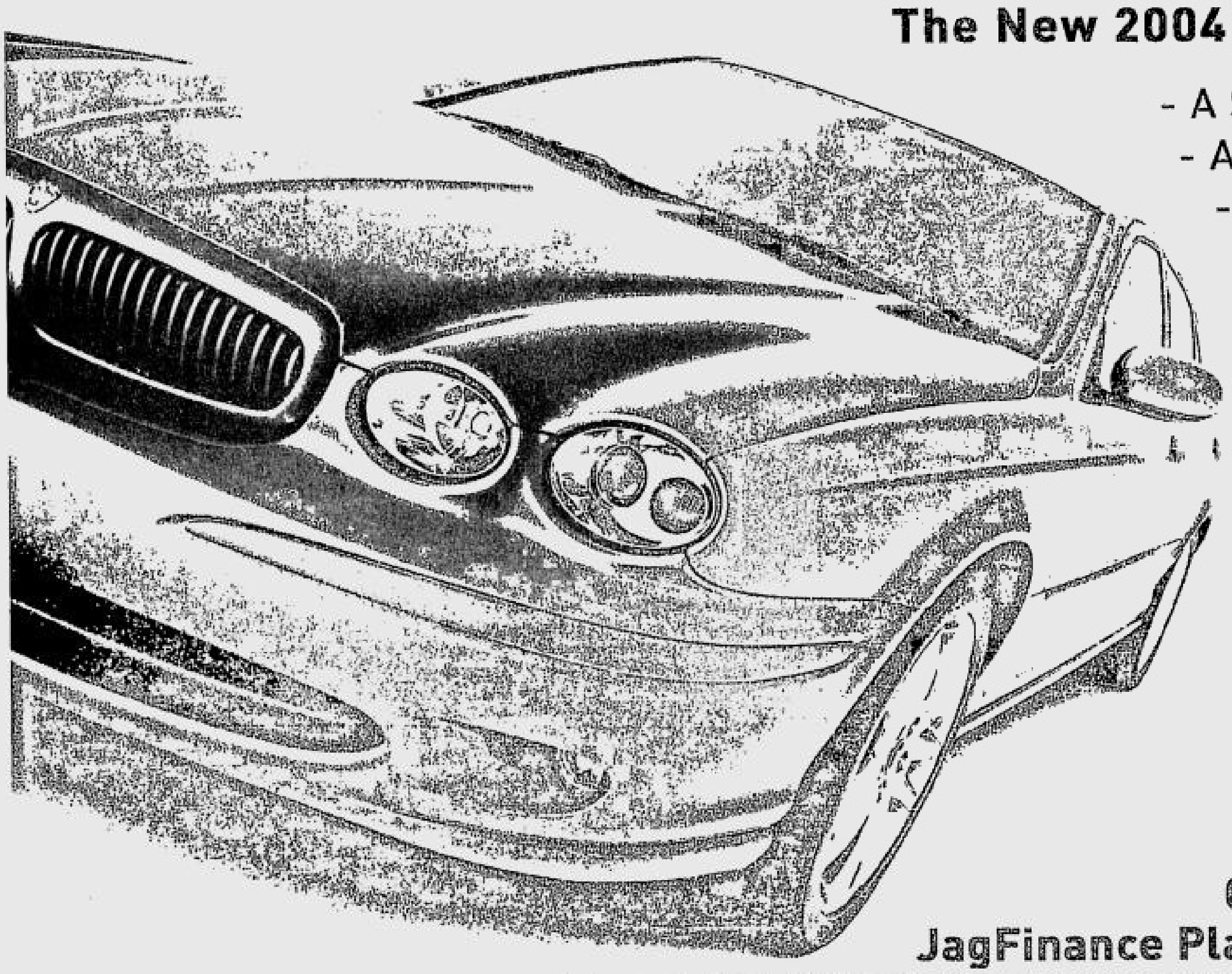
A PERCEPTIVE motorist knows driving entails more than just skillful maneuverings of the wheel and keen sense of direction. It is also important to have a reliable, heavy-duty engine that runs on a highly efficient fuel like Shell Diesoline Ultra (SDU) in traversing the rough and often heavily-traffic roads of Metro Manila.

The newly launched SDU is low-sulfur diesel formulated for clean power and pure performance with reduced exhaust emissions. It boasts of special cleaning properties that eliminate carbon deposits produced by other diesel fuels. SDU is also super refined to be clean and pure, without impurities or contaminants.

SDU was developed to answer the clamor for cleaner fuel with more power yet lesser smoke emissions.



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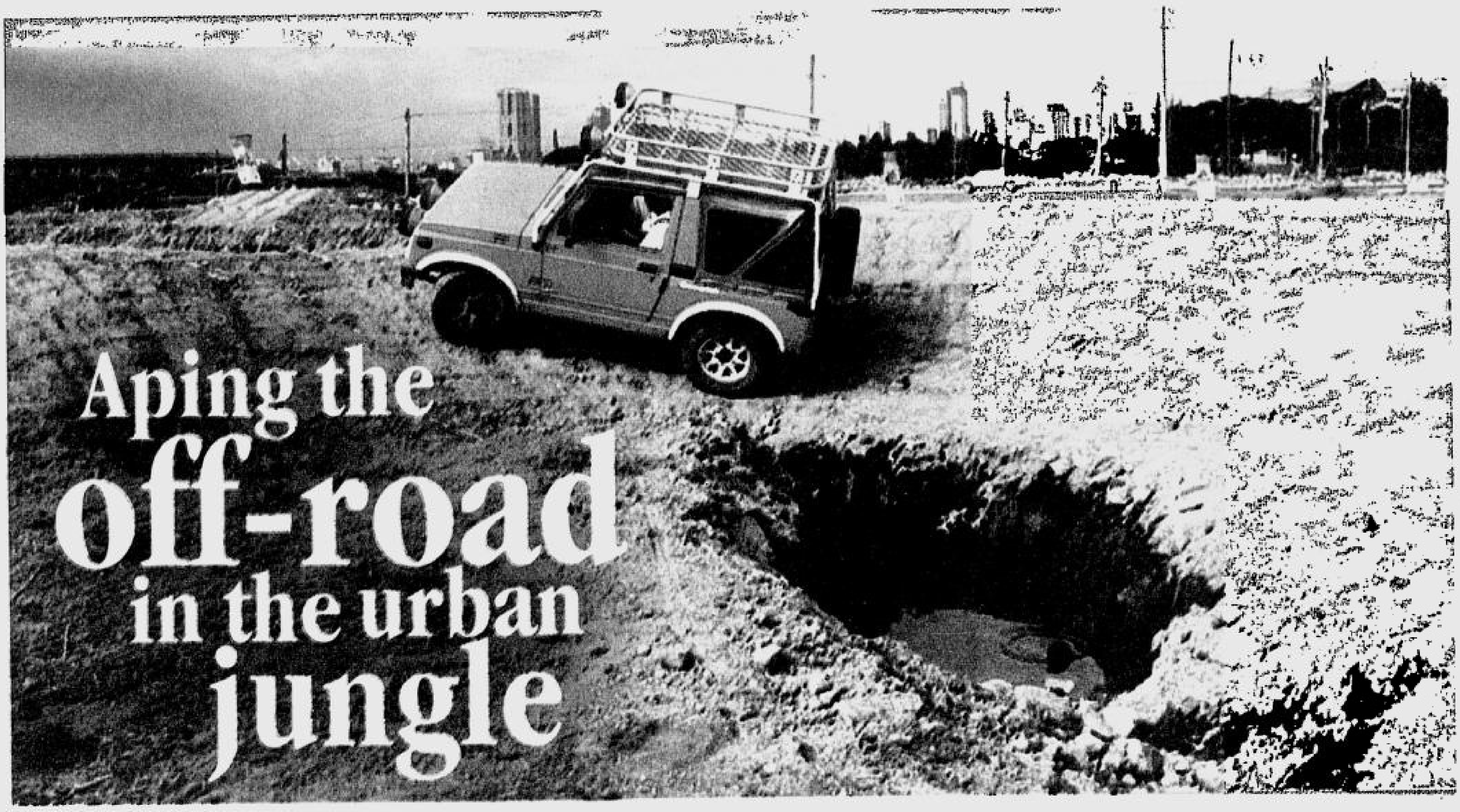
Aping the off-road in the urban jungle



JOEY'S truck goes around a "crater."

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar

YOU don't need to go out of Metro Manila to experience how an off-road is like. Just find yourself a vacant lot, and let your landscaping skills do the trick for you.

Look for a vacant lot, then start digging and dumping. Dig deep, dump high. And then test your off-road landscape and show it off to your fellow truckers or aspiring off-roaders.

This is exactly what the Off-road Club did at The Fort in Makati, using Isuzu's Philippines' newest pickup the D-Max.

D-MAX goes wild and dirty at The Fort.

Ride-and-drive treat

Representatives from Auto Review, Manila Standard and INQUIRER were treated to a ride and drive by Isuzu on its D-Max. Manila Off-roaders Inc. instructors Joey Millonado and the rest of the gang led by Brian Diaz gladly lent their expertise as we dug through muddy tracks they created for potential D-Max customers and curious motoring people like us.

Thank goodness for D-Max's powerful airconditioning, we didn't have to be subjected to the scorching heat of the midday sun.

My "fear factor" moment came when I maneuvered myself into a big wormhole and the right side of the pickup was facing uphill nearly vertically, and my side almost touched the ground. Almost every spectator in the line waiting for his or her turn to drive the D-Max watched in fear, anticipating I would eventually lie sideways or turn over.

Dino Directo of Manila Standard and Jenny So of Auto Review, who were at the time my passengers, were scampering to get off like the passengers of the stricken Titanic. Channeling my adrenalin to my instructor, I calmly obeyed his instructions that would literally take us out of the rut.

D-Max specs sheet brags that this pickup can safely be driven laterally on slopes of up to 49 degrees

OFF-ROAD truckers go wild (above). D-Max can be driven laterally on slopes up to 49 degrees (right).

Safely driven laterally

Later, on level ground, he explained to onlookers that the D-Max's suspension could handle such unusual positions and still keep the vehicle upright.

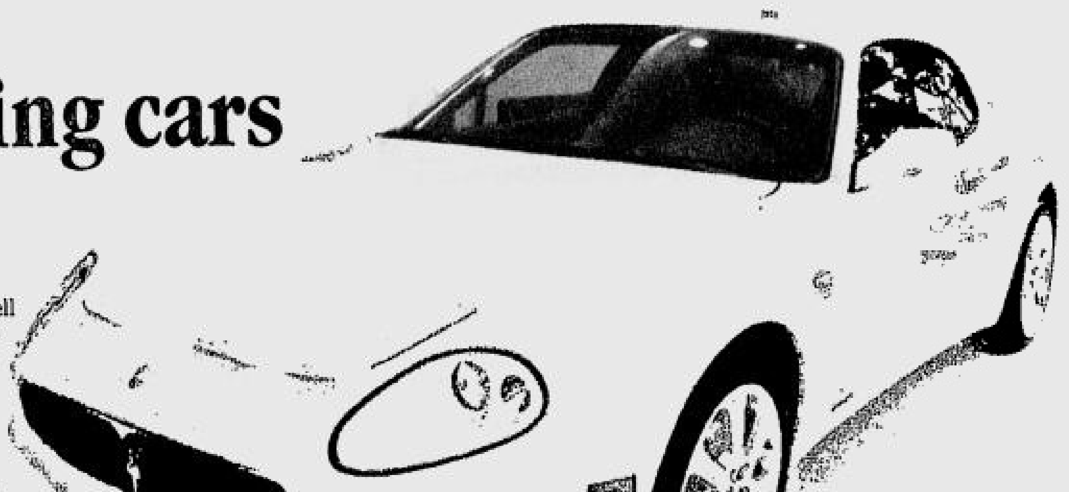
D-Max specs sheet brags that this pickup can safely be driven laterally on slopes of up to 49 degrees. Meanwhile, its high ground clearance of 225 mm protects the underside from damage in rough road conditions.

The off-road tracks created by the instructors were masterpieces by themselves, highlighting every aspect of off-roading. When test-drivers had their fill, it was time for a little exhibition from Millonado, who ran his 4x4 in reverse on the track and literally ended in a cliffhanger maneuver.

Ho-hum. What I was really looking forward to was a D-Max being winched up the side of the Tektite Towers. How about it, Joey?

REBIRTH OF MASERATI

Italy's famed grand touring cars making a splash in RP



WALKING though Formula Sports Inc.'s (the local authorized dealer of Maserati and Ferrari) showroom in Ortigas Center and viewing the gleaming, yellow of the Maserati Coupé can be summed up into one word. Amazing. Yes, Maserati is in the Philippines. For a few, the question most likely to pop up would be: Where has Maserati been all these years? Or more important for the uninitiated: What exactly is a Maserati?

For those unfamiliar, Maserati is one of Italy's most famed makers of sports cars. Founded by the seven Maserati brothers in 1914 in Bologna, the company was most known for their ability to build fast, beautiful and reliable racing cars. This fact attracted some of the brightest stars in racing of those days, such as Tazio Nuvolari, and Wilbur Shaw (Shaw won the famous Indianapolis 500 Miles in 1939 and 1940 in a Maserati Single Seater). Maserati was Ferrari's closest rival for more than six decades. The rivalry came to its zenith in 1953, when Alberto Ascari, at the wheel of a Ferrari, narrowly beat Maserati's Juan Manuel Fangio to win the Driver's World Championship.

Since then, the rivals took different paths. Ferrari continued to dominate the race circuits. Maserati however, went into a slump having passed from one owner to another.

AS THE OFFICIAL Maserati dealer in the Philippines, FSI also boasts a fully equipped service facility for the repair and maintenance of Maserati and Ferrari cars.

But with a name so well known and a tradition so fabled, Maserati would stage a comeback, with more than a little help from its greatest rival. Ferrari took over leadership of Maserati from Fiat in 1997, and now, after nearly a decade of work, Maserati feels it is time to come back and carry on its true tradition.

A brand all its own

Although Ferrari owns Maserati, the latter has a distinctly different focus. Maseratis are built at separate factories with distinct product development teams.

While Ferraris are more thoroughbred in nature, Maseratis have now returned to their roots as sporting grand tourers or GTs; cars designed to travel long distances in comfort, style and luxury.

"Maserati boasts of sports cars a little less extreme than Ferrari, but still distinctly more aggressive than most of its European or American counterparts, with more opulence weaved into its design," explained Carlos Nakpil, managing director of Formula Sports.

With the Maserati, you have the best of both worlds, a powerful, stylish sports car that is comfortable enough to drive everyday. "This blend of comfort, luxury and extreme performance in a car is the prize for those who truly appreciate this grand Italian marquee," Nakpil said.

Comfort, style, more style

You'll start to see what sets the cars apart from other European brands when you climb aboard a Maserati. As sports cars in this class go, the Maserati Coupé is genuinely generous in terms of size and seating capacity. It is a true four-seater with rear seats that provide ample space, yet at the same time maintaining the sleek line sports cars are known for. Best of all, it maintains its high level of performance expected from a sports car; a genuine GT.

Once the door closes, the feeling one gets is that of riding first class. Inside everything is beautifully wrapped in leather; from dash, to console, right up to the headliner! Through its Officine Alfieri Maserati Program (OAM), Maserati also carries a wider array of color choices than most other competitors in its class. Sixteen exterior colors and 12 leather options allow up to three million possible combinations ensuring a truly personalized driving ambience.

This Maserati also comes with the authority to back up its sporting looks. Pop the hood and you'll find 4.2 liters of lightweight alloy V8 capable of passing 390 hp through a rear mounted transaxle; the layout of choice for optimum weight distribution, traction and handling.

Also conspicuous is the lack of a traditional manual shifter; instead you get the "Cambiocorsa" electrohydraulic-shift system incorporating two paddles behind the steering wheel, one to shift up, and one to shift down, akin to that used in Ferrari's Formula 1 racing transmissions.

Reliable service anywhere

Maserati is very adamant about the quality of its authorized service centers worldwide. As the official Maserati dealer in the Philippines, FSI also boasts a fully equipped service facility for the repair and maintenance of Maserati and Ferrari cars.

This service center, located in Makati City, has all the latest diagnostic equipment and specialized technicians to make sure these cars run their very best.

Glimpse of what's to come

The Maserati Coupé and Spyder have already sold well against their sports car counterparts from Germany, England and the US. But with its flagship model, the four-door Quattroporte sedan (a segment created by Maserati with the first Quattroporte in 1963), Maserati expects to widen its market presence even further. This unique, high performance full-size luxury sedan was enthusiastically received at the 2003 Frankfurt Motor show and is expected to arrive in the Philippines next year.

"If you like the Coupé and the Spyder, wait 'til April when the Quattroporte comes around," he added. "It will be the ultimate in terms of full-size performance, luxury, and of course, that inimitable Italian style." If the Coupé and the Spyder are any indication, then April should prove to be an interesting time for car aficionados in the country.

Jaguar adopts aerospace technology with new XJ

XJR5

JAGUAR is set anew to dominate the luxury car market with the redesigned Jaguar XJ series.

With the new aluminum monocoque chassis adopted from the aerospace industry, the new XJ is 40 percent lighter and 60 percent stiffer than the previous heavier steel-bodied model. This provides car owners with better performance, nimble handling and excellent fuel economy.

"The use of aircraft technology has allowed Jaguar to shatter the traditional perception that aluminum is a weak metal. One ride in the new XJ will be enough to confirm this," says Wellington Soong, president of Jaguar Cars Inc.

The full range of the series XJ6 3.0, XJ8 3.5, XJ 4.2 and XJR 4.2 S/C will be available for local buyers to choose from. Prices for the new XJ will range from P5.5 million for the base model up to approximately P8 million for the XJR.

The supercharged 4.2-liter XJR goes from naught to 60 in 5 seconds—only 4/10ths of a second slower to 60 than a Ferrari 360 Modena. The base XJ6 hits 60 in just 7.8 seconds and is more than a match for its competitors despite its more frugal 3.0-liter engine.

FROM LEFT are Basil Louis, regional business manager, Jaguar/Landrover Asia; British Ambassador Paul Dimond and Wellington C. Soong, chair and president, Jaguar Philippines.

Unique to Jaguar

The all-aluminum monocoque chassis is unique to Jaguar. Local aficionados will be pleased with Jaguar's adherence to traditional exterior styling and elegantly inviting interiors while incorporating genuinely valuable new technology.

According to Soong, reaction has been excellent with the new XJ's larger body but still feline curves. "The XJ is already a motoring icon so Jaguar was understandably conservative in updating it. Most of the changes have come in the engineering, but enough was changed to give the car a contemporary appearance without losing any of the traditional styling cues and old-world elegance of the marque," he said.

Decided English character

The XJ stands out because of its decided English character—the traditional body styling , the warm wood or leather interior and the smooth ride provide a more inviting alternative to the stark interiors and avant-garde techno exteriors of the German counterparts.

The new XJ has increased interior volume—6.4 inches longer wheelbase, 4.3 inches taller, 2.6 inches longer, 1.3 inches wider and with 30 percent more trunk space than the former model. The proportion of wheel arches front and rear narrows between the top of the arches and fender lines, maintaining its sleek look. Giving the new car its drama is the high beltline which "lends to the impression of it moving forward."

Safety features

Safety in using an XJ is always ensured with Jaguar's Adaptive Restraint Technology System (ARTS). In a fraction of a second, sensors monitor the position and weight of the driver and front passenger and determines which safety systems to activate and at what energy level.

In case of collision, ARTS automatically adjusts airbag deployment that keeps occupants safe yet reduces bag-induced injuries. Those are just some of the passive safety bits engineered in an actively safe car. The new XJ faced the rigorous testing of the passenger car (pascar) "whole life" test that stimulates 150,000 miles of real world use and abuse and the Combined Road and Environmental Simulation Test (CREST) that stimulates accelerated aging and exposure to extreme temperature and humidity.

XJR2

Volvo, Hyundai and Isuzu; LTO heart-warmer

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

THERE are three new vehicles that should catch your attention before you buy your new ride this Christmas.

The first one is the Volvo S40 (engine displacement: 2.0 liter, r cylinders, 16 valves, 136 bhp, 5-speed automatic adaptive transmission). Getting its tag as the world's first safest car to be invented, the S40 model of the Volvo has undergone major changes in safety, fuel consumption and design (both inside and out). Its new IC (inflatable curtain) has been enhanced to improve protection when a collision occurs. The side-impact curtain's inflatable cells are now bigger and deeper to offer protection for the car occupants' heads. The IC deploys more quickly, and it is fully inflated after just 30 thousandths of a second.

For personal security, the new Volvo S40 comes with a key remote control featuring an alarm button that activates the alarm lights and the siren to discourage car thieves. Its exterior design is now akin to the changing times; the new grille with its black egg crate pattern lends a touch of added sportiness. The headlamps augment the car's solid features. Its seats have been enlarged, reinforcing Volvo's tradition as being one of the most comfortable rides in the automobile world.

Now the cost: P1,525,000. Not that costly if you ask me. And since Volvo spells quality, you won't regret having bought one. As I keep saying, quality has always been expensive.

* * *

The next one is the Hyundai XG. The vehicle evokes a minimalist approach with its styling. Elegant and graceful, the Hyundai XG exudes with comfort; its interior is enhanced by modern amenities, such as leather seats, electric driver seat, driver memory, trip computer, automatic climate control and keyless entry.

Its five main features are anti-lock braking system with an electronic force distribution system, seatbelt load limiter and pretensioner, traction control system, automatic light control and reinforced front chassis design. And how about this: the rear cabin can accommodate four sets of golf clubs! Truly a car for the golfing family.

And there's more: the Hyundai XG is equipped with a 6-speaker FM/FM tape player/CD stereo system, tilt/telescopic steering wheel and an all-round air-conditioning system.

* * *

The third one is the Isuzu D-Max, which is Isuzu's next generation pickup. It boasts of a beastly engine whose power is reputedly the most powerful in its class, innovative exterior and interior features.

With its 3.0-liter engine (4JHI-TC direction injection turbo intercooler diesel engine), the machine generates a maximum power of 130hp, with a torque of 285. kg m (manual) and 30 kg m (automatic) and an impressive dry-element air cleaner that's Euro 1 emission compliant.

Said Toru Koyasu, president of Isuzu Philippines Corp., during the launch of the Isuzu D-Max: "Isuzu has established its position as the leader in diesel technology and our durable and functional vehicles are looked upon as partners by many proud Filipino owners. You will see that in this new landscape of fierce competition, we at Isuzu are further strengthening our lineup by introducing future class leading products."

The Isuzu D-Max 2WD costs P920,000 for manual and P975,000 for automatic. The 4WD comes at P1,255,000 and automatic P1,310,000.

* * *

Here's an interesting letter that should warm the hearts of LTO people. It came from Joey Zaballero of San Francisco del Monte, QC.

"Dear Mr. Mendoza,

"I needed to renew my driver's license recently. So I dropped by the local LTO near my office in Bo. Kapitolyo, Pasig City. I was ready for another one of those UP type chaos 'pila' situations but, lo and behold, it took me only 45 minutes. I was out of there unstressed, happy and holding onto my new card license, looking forward to doing the same thing again in 2006. Gone are the fixers, the long lines and most important 'did they put my papers in the right pile' thoughts.

"Sure, they still make you run around a bit, especially with the drug test (which I'm happy to say I passed) and the medical which consisted of me reading the bottom line half with my left eye, half with my right. I think both tests will basically keep only the most drug-crazed and medically unfit people off the road (if they even do bother doing an actual test on the urine to begin with) but receipts are issued and it all looks above board (P300 drug test, P50 medical). Even with these, I was out in 45 minutes.

"Here is the clincher. You know the place you finally claim your license. More recently it's the photographer who took your picture. The guy used to hand over your license complete with a green (nonprof) or red (Prof) plastic cover and charge you P50 for it, no words spoken, just fork over the money. Back then (1999), you usually go through an 'if I don't get the cover will he still give my license' conflict (note, no receipts issued here) but again, lo and behold, this time around they give you your license and ask you if you want a cover. Alleluia.

"This was probably the first time I genuinely said thank you to people in government offices and mean it.

"Of course you can't please everyone. There was one woman (who has an Expedition), mumbling to herself about drug tests and medicals, etc., but she piped down after she realized everyone else was happily waiting their turn."

* * *

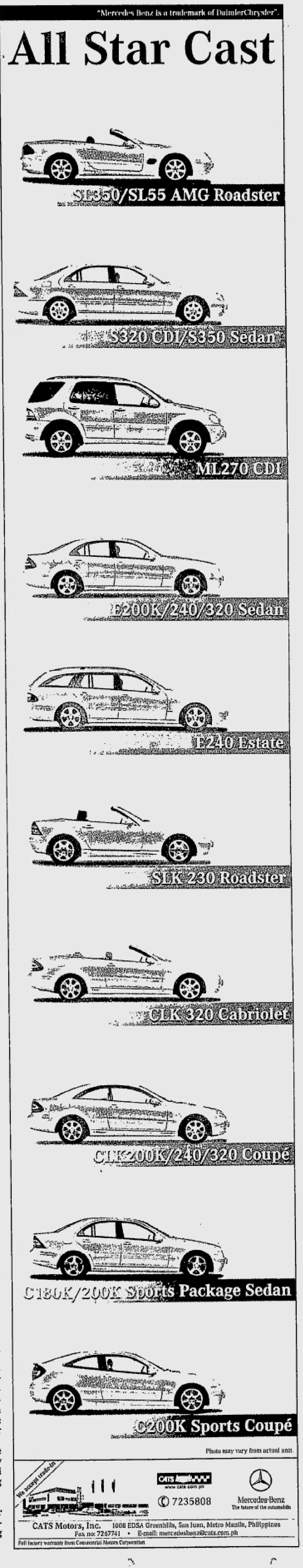
To the still grumbling motorists regularly using the Northern Luzon Expressway, take note. One of the government's flagship projects within the context of its economic development programs is the rehabilitation, expansion and improvement of the 84-kilometer North Luzon Expressway. Its progress and completion are being monitored by the Neda and the Regional Development Council—regional project monitoring committee, being a key strategic infrastructure project of Central Luzon.

Now in its ninth month of its 24-month construction timetable, the NLE project has already provided hundreds of jobs to its suppliers, contractors and service providers. Already hundreds are directly employed by the project with thousands more expected resulting from the rapid development brought about by the faster and more attractive trading routes.

A little more patience is needed before we could fully savor the comfort brought on by the completion of the NLE rehabilitation and expansion under the tested leadership of Ping de Jesus.

* * *

QUOTE ME. We destroy to build. Bear that in mind and you will soon stop complaining about all that construction going on at the Northern Luzon Expressway.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Road safety for motorcycle riders

By Alcuin Papa

MOTORCYCLE manufacturers in the country have banded together to increase education among both motorcycle riders and drivers of other vehicles to highlight road safety.

The Motorcycle Development Program Participants Association, an organization of motorcycle manufacturers in the country, recently held its road safety seminar last Friday bringing together representatives of concerned government agencies, local and regional motorcycle advocate groups and riding clubs.

The seminar was aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of motorcycle riders' safety on the streets.

Accidents

Alfredo Alarcon, MDPPA president, said the number of vehicular accidents involving motorcycles in the country is still significantly lower than those involving cars and other vehicles.

However, Alarcon noted that the number of motorcycle accidents is rising not only in the country but in Asia as well.

Said Alarcon: "The market for solo users is growing. In line with the industry's objectives, we are working to stop the increase of accidents and make the use of motorcycles more attractive."

He added that the local motorcycle industry has seen a very steep increase in sales in the past five years. Hence the industry cannot ignore the reality of road fatalities.

The MDPPA is composed of local branches of global manufacturers like Kawasaki, Suzuki, Honda, Norkis Yamaha, Kymco and Loncin.

Negative perceptions

Alarcon said they also want to dispel the negative perceptions and attitudes related to motorcyclists and motorcycle riding.

"People keep saying that when you start riding motorcycles, you are putting one foot in your grave. This is not true since motorcycles are actually involved in less accidents compared to cars," Alarcon said.

He added that motorcycle riders "have their reflexes at 101 percent."

James Mirasol of the Motorcycle Advocates of the Philippines stressed that his group has been saying all along that "motorcycles are safer, not accident prone, and have half the mortality rate as compared to other vehicles."

He also said the majority of motorcycle accidents are caused by other vehicles.

Linkup

As a result of the seminar, Alarcon said they managed to link up with concerned government agencies like the Philippine National Police Traffic Management Group and the Land Transportation Office.

Alarcon said the two agencies have pledged to cooperate with the MDPPA to identify roads prone to motorcycle accidents.

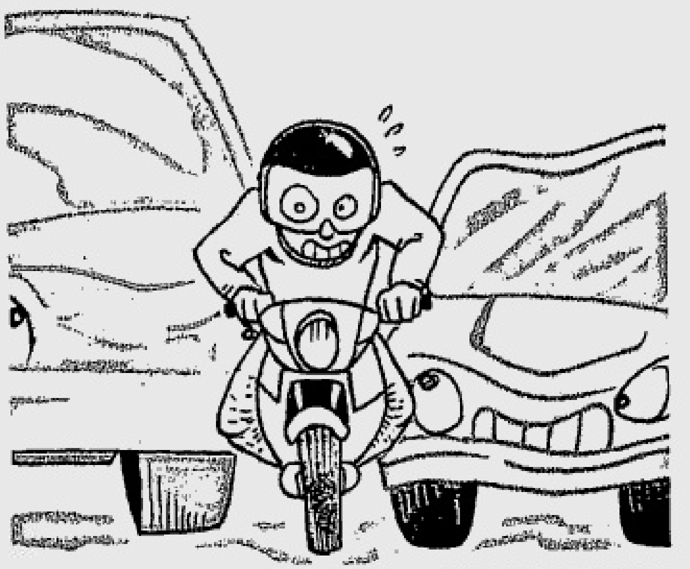

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

"Once these roads have been identified, we can request for warning signs to be put there to warn drivers."

He added that their groups also plan to hold symposiums and seminars to emphasize driver education. "We noticed that there is very little or no courtesy for motorcycle riders given by car drivers and bus drivers."

Said Mirasol: "It all boils down to education among riders and drivers. Because there is a lack of education to the point that government agencies are formulating policies that promote fallacies about motorcycle riding. What is needed is a national educational campaign involving the government, private sectors and manufacturers.

Education programs

In fact, Mirasol said representatives to the seminar from government agencies "expressed common disdain for motorcycles. But in the end, we converted them. They said the seminar raised their awareness and now their eyes have been opened."

Mirasol also suggested that the government grant a 2 percent deduction on manufacturers' taxes which would go to funding a nationwide motorcycle education and awareness program.

On their own, Alarcon said motorcycle manufacturers are already embarking on their own projects to emphasize and encourage safety.

Ford caps 100th year with a bang

FORD Philippines caps its centennial with a full-blast celebration on Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at The Fort in Makati.

The event, dubbed "Ford Day 2003: Celebrating 100 years of Forever Real Drivers," will include activities that will allow old and new Ford drivers to interact and share their experiences with their Ford vehicles. It will also showcase Ford's history, present and future plans.

The Ford Day 2003 will kick off with a motorcade of Ford vehicle owners and Vintage Car Clubs. The motorcade will start at The Fort going to Ayala Avenue, Makati Avenue and Pasay Road and back at The Fort as other activities are ongoing for the rest of the family.

These include the search for the oldest Ford vehicle; Me and My Ford photo exhibit; the next 100 years of Ford contest for kids 13 and below who want to create their own futuristic version of a Ford vehicle using clay and several materials.

Said Henry Co, president of Ford Group Philippines: "Our 100th anniversary is truly a milestone for us and we would like to celebrate this momentous occasion with our customers, friends and employees. After all, not many companies make it this far. It's an excellent opportunity—and vantage point—from which to look back on what we've learned in the last 100 years, and to look ahead to how we'll continue to build on our past successes."

Complete contest mechanics and application forms can be downloaded at www.ford.com.ph/2003.

'Auto Review' goes one hour on NBN 4

YOU can now watch "Auto Review" every 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. every Saturday.

Now on its ninth year on air, "Auto Review" used to be a 30-minute show.

It features test drives, car maintenance tips, automotive news updates, motorsports and destinations.

Watch out for the Indy Races in Gold Coast, Australia; Honda CR-V 4x4 peak drive; the Isuzu Challenge Finals; the third Philippine Tough Truck Challenge; the Mitsubishi Fun Camp; the second Caltex Delo-Land Cruiser Club Jamboree and Caltex Havoline Car Doctor.

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P255/70 R16 Wrangler RT/S OWL	P5,858	P4,800	P1,058
31 X 10.5 R15 Kelly Safari OWL	P6,277	P4,400	P1,877

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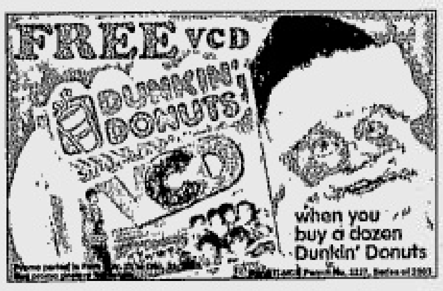
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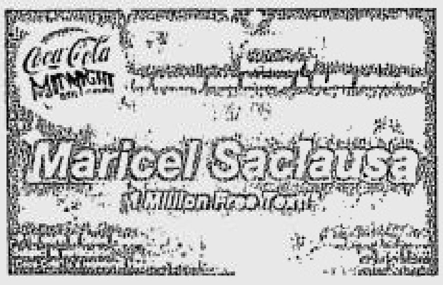
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ORGANIC rice: a healthy alternative

Rice rituals may vary from culture to culture, but no other grain deserves more reverence

How to cook a perfect pot of rice and a side dish of 'buro'

EACH day, more than three billion people live primarily on over 120,000 varieties of rice. If to Shakespeare, a day without wine is like a day without sunshine, to us Asians, a meal without rice is like getting stuck in Edsa during a flashflood on a pay day Friday in December, with a militant group holding a protest rally in the Shrine!

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Rice rituals may vary from culture to culture, but no other grain deserves more reverence. After all, nothing warms nor comforts our stomachs more than a bowl of perfectly steamed rice!

I've been reading your column in the INQUIRER through the Internet. I never fail to read it and clip the recipes. I have tried some of them and found them easy to prepare.

I've been in the US for 31 years now and would like to ask you a favor of featuring in your column the recipe for Burong Kanin. This is one delicacy that I miss so much. My mother makes it but, she unfortunately has Alzheimer's now and not able to recall the recipe. I just hope you can research the recipe.

JAIME GARCIA
Las Vegas, Nevada

Alzheimer's is something I've been suffering from since birth! But perhaps today is your lucky day! I had a great recipe for Burong Kanin but misplaced it. Huh! That's a perfect, example of an Alzheimer's episode, ain't it?! However, I was lucky enough to remember two experts on the subject and their phone numbers, too—Claude Tayag and Gene Gonzales, for whose support I'm grateful, given the 30-minute deadline!

Burong Isda is a popular Pampango sauce made with fermented rice and fish (like *hito, dalag, tilapia, gurami*). If made with shrimps (and sometimes with bamboo shoot added), it is called *balo-balo*. It is usually served with any fried, grilled or charbroiled fish (*bangus, hito, dalag* or *tilapia*), accompanied with fresh *mustasa* (mustard leaves), grilled eggplants, okra and *ampalaya*.

Here are two versions, and I sure hope one of them perfectly suits your craving, for as the ad goes, *talaga kasing walang ganyan sa* States!

Claude's Buro

½ kg very fresh fish (or 1" size shrimps, if making *balo-balo*), washed and cleaned well
1 c rock salt
10 c cooked rice

In a large enameled or glass bowl (not metallic), mix fish, rice and salt using sterilized utensils, or if with hands, using gloves. Pack in a clean, dry glass or ceramic jar. Cover tightly the jar's mouth with cling-wrap, then close tightly with lid. Place in a cool place to ferment for 5-10 days (acidity and flavor of the final result will depend on the length of fermentation. Some will ferment it up to 30 days, which to my personal taste, could be offensive in smell and flavor. It is much an acquired taste, just like the difference between cheddar and blue cheese.)

How to cook Buro:

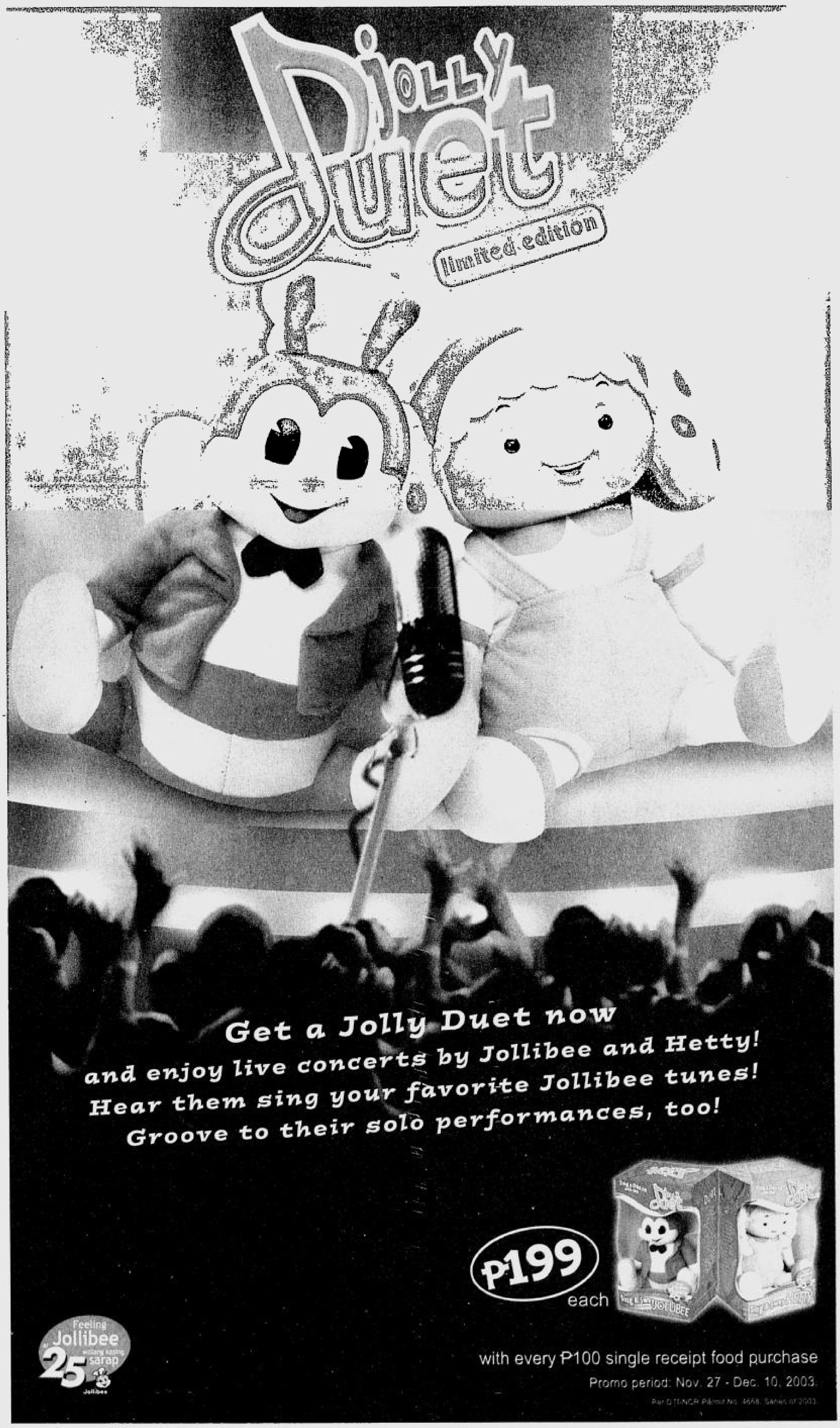
Using a frying pan, heat ½ c oil and sauté ¼ c minced garlic and ½ c chopped onions till translucent. Add 2 tbsp ginger strips and 1 c diced tomatoes. Continue sautéing till tomatoes are cooked. Add the fermented rice in batches, adding a little water to make stirring easier. Stir constantly to prevent bottom from burning. This should last about 10 minutes. Can be served at room temperature. Uneaten portion should be refrigerated.

If you don't have the time to make *buro* from scratch, Claude sells bottled Balo-balo (as well as Taba ng Talangka, XXXO sauce, and Pesto) in Rustan's, Robinsons, Landmark and SM supermarkets under "Claude's" label.

Chef Gene's Burong Apahap (Fermented Bass in Rice)

two 1-ft-long *apahap* (bass), sliced
1 ¼ c salt
6 c plain *lugao* (rice gruel)
2 tbsp pounded *angcac* (optional)
labong (bamboo shoots) or *nangka* (jackfruit) leaves
1 tsp chopped garlic
1 tbsp chopped onions

HOW/D3



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4668, Series of 2003

6

ADD the peeled fresh chestnuts, wet with veal stock or beef stock and cook covered.

7

TO make the sauce: in a container, pour in the red wine, raspberry vinegar, shallots, parsley and lime juice. Let marinate for 24 hours.

8

STRAIN the wine mixture before transferring into the pan. Reduce the mixture until dry, then add 1/8 cup of veal or beef stock and 1 tsp of butter.

Behold the rack of lamb

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Egay Montano

IF you're looking for a more elaborate, elegant and memorable dish this Christmas that will earn raves from your family and friends, a lamb dish is a perfect solution.

In France, the traditional Christmas menu usually includes a lamb dish.

"Lamb is very popular as a holiday entrée. Properly prepared, the slow-cooked meat is tender and full of flavor," says Hotel Inter-Con's executive chef Cyrille Soenen.

For this season, the French chef has created a unique French lamb dish—and its ideal side dishes—called Lamb Fillet with Raspberry Vinegar, Braised Chestnuts and Green Cabbage. (In French, Noisettes de Agneau Marinees au vin de Framboise Marrons Braises et Choux Verts.) This recipe can be done for only an hour and yet is still infused with flavor. The secret is a good cut of meat, in this case lamb loin.

"Traditionally in France, we use venison for a stronger flavor and taste, but I've made variations for lamb to suit the Filipino taste," adds Chef Soenen.

Lamb loins are generally cut into loin chops. Ask your butcher for a boneless loin of lamb and have it trimmed.

The lamb sauce has to be done the day before actual cooking. The red wine, raspberry vinegar, shallots, parsley and lime juice have to be thoroughly blended for 24 hours. The robust sauce actually enhances the overall flavor of the traditional taste of lamb.

Mashed potatoes usually accompany a lamb dish, but Chef Soenen has, instead, concocted mashed chestnuts for a change. Fortunately, peeled chestnuts are now available at leading supermarkets and delis, such as Shopwise and Rustan's. But, if you have to do it the hard way, simply buy chestnuts, make a cross on the skin, cook them in boiling water for a minute or so then peel them while hot. Most of the ingredients for this recipe are locally available, particularly at Santi's.

"The lamb recipe makes a good family dinner and can be easily doubled for entertaining," says Soenen.

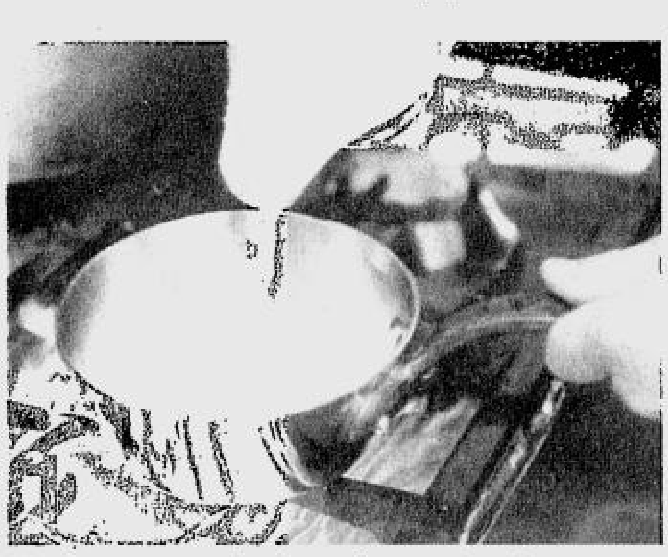
This recipe is good for four persons.

Ingredients:

1 k lamb loin or lamb rack, cut 1-cm thick
½ c green cabbage or Chinese cabbage, cubed and blanched
4 small leeks, diagonally cut, blanched
1 bottle red wine
1 bunch parsley, crushed
4 tbsp raspberry vinegar
5 shallots, minced
10 fresh chestnuts, skinned (for braising)
1 raw sugar beet, julienne (optional)
1 carrot, minced
¼ c orange juice
¼ c lemon juice
2 tbsp lime juice
1 banana, cubed
2 apples, cubed
1 tsp paprika
2 k chestnut, skinned (for mashing)
5 tbsp sugar
¼ c veal stock or beef stock
1 onion, minced

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

STEP BY STEP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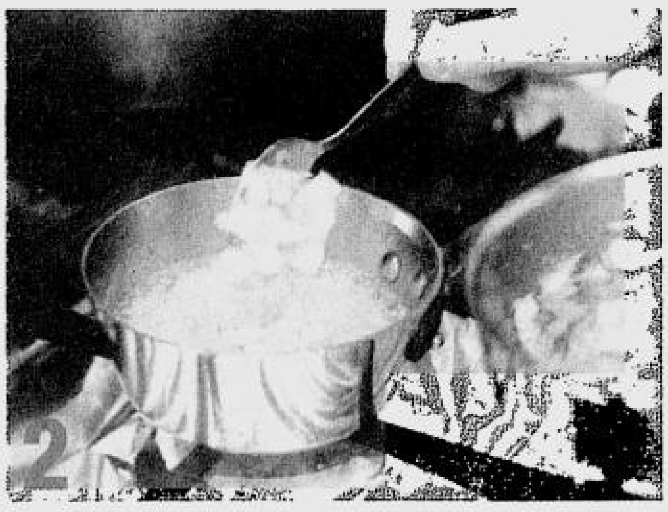
IN a saucepan over medium heat, make caramel out of sugar, orange juice and lemon juice.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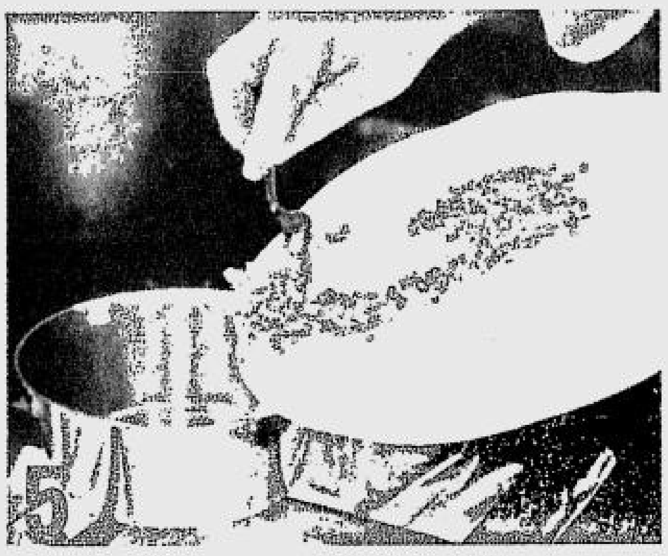
IN another pan, put 1 tsp of butter and sauté banana and apples till soft. Add to the caramel mixture. Mix in the paprika. Set aside.

3

COOK the chestnuts in chicken stock then mash them.

4

MIX the fruit-and-caramel mixture with the mashed chestnuts. Set aside.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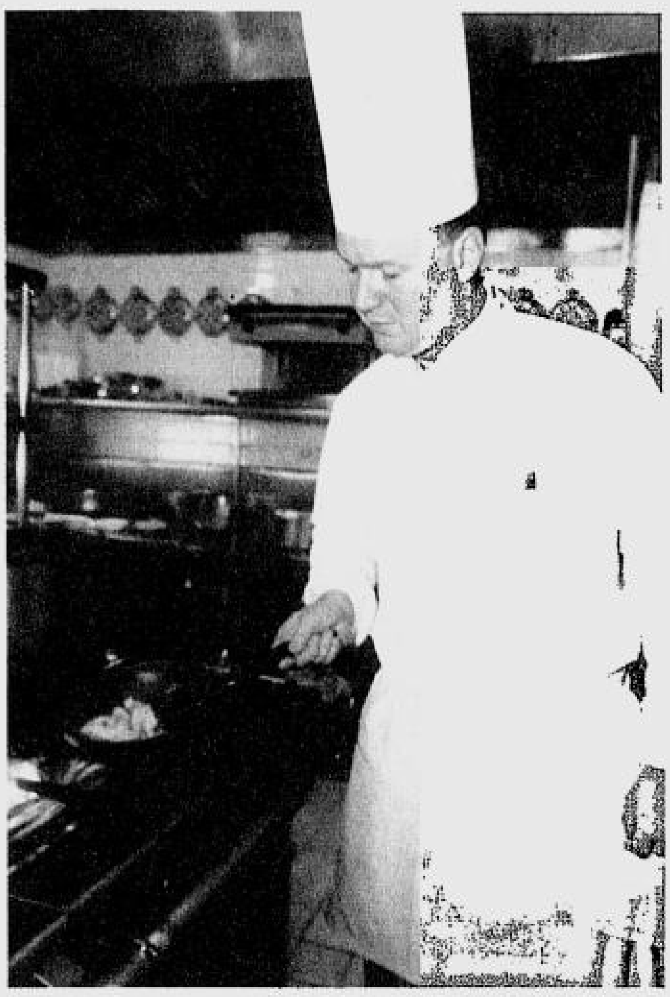
IN A pan, put 1 tsp of butter and cook carrots and onions.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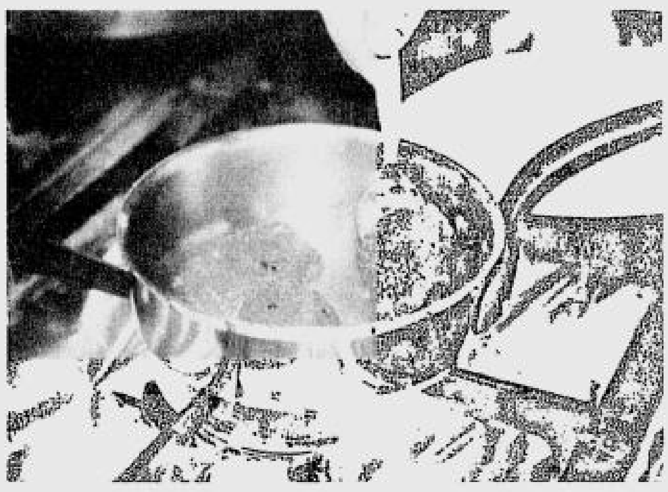
MEANWHILE, in another pan with 2 tbsp butter, sauté cabbage and leeks. Add salt and pepper to taste.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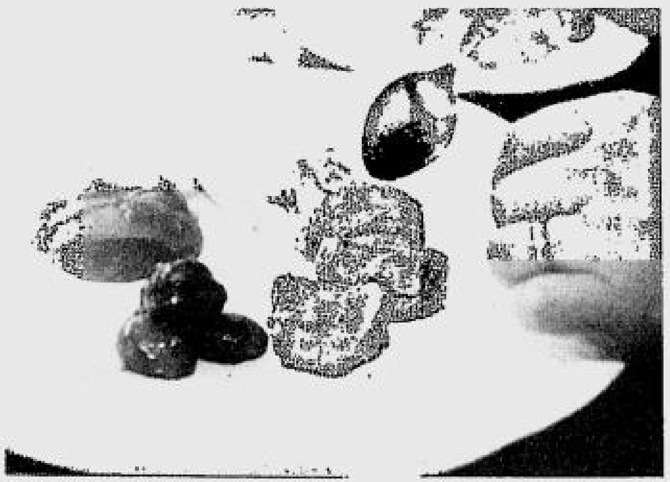
BEFORE cooking the lamb, marinate lamb for five minutes in the sauce. In a pan with a little oil, pan-fry the lamb on each side and keep warm. Cook it how you like it—rare, medium well or well done.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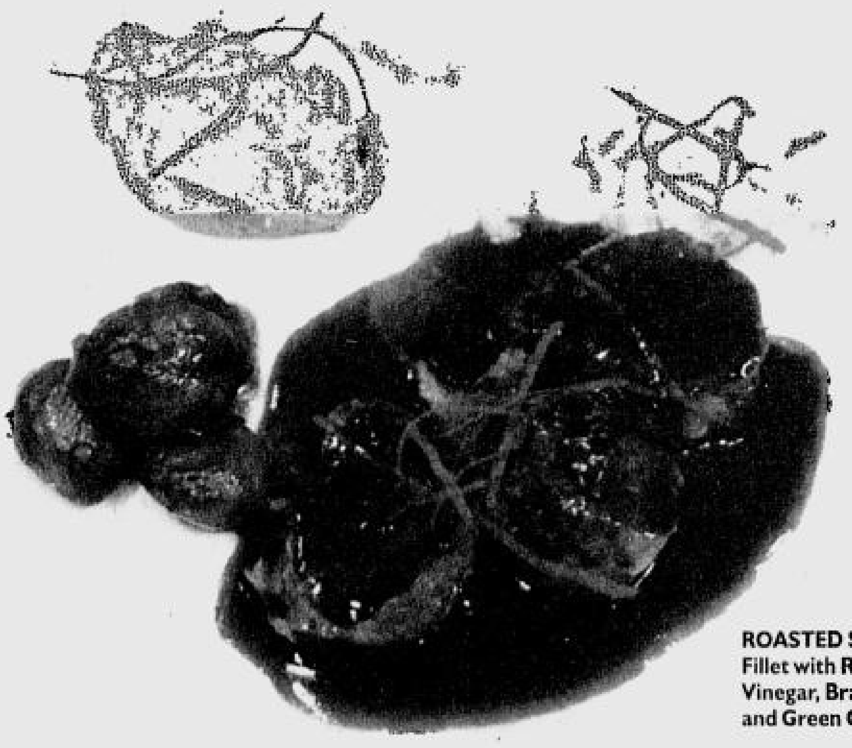
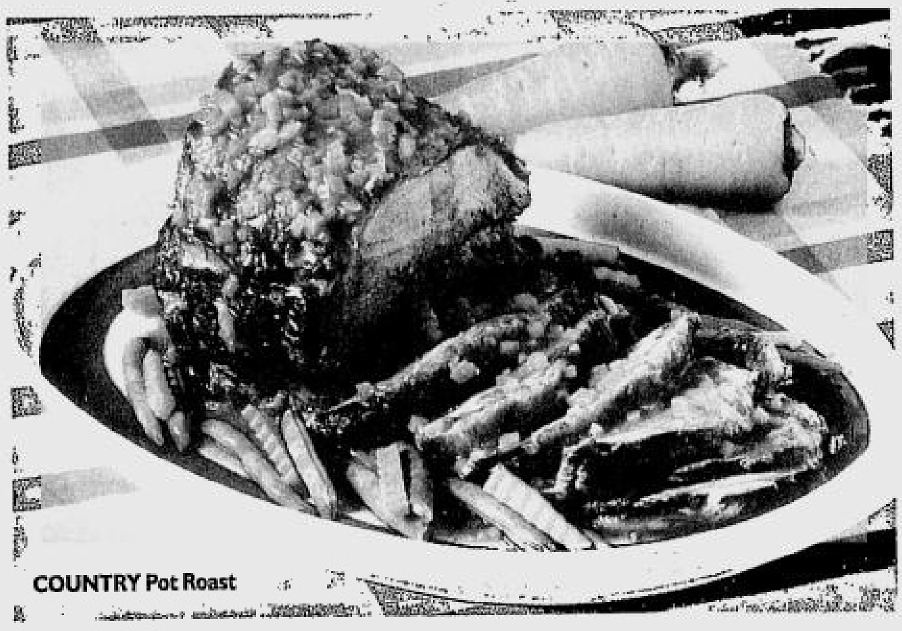
BEFORE serving, place a quenelle of mashed chestnuts. Add the braised chestnuts in the center. On the bottom part of the plate, place the lamb and cover with reduced sauce. Top with sugar beet for deeper flavor and color.

Properly prepared, the slow-cooked meat is tender and full of flavor, and will surely earn raves from your loved ones


ROASTED Slice of Lamb Fillet with Raspberry Vinegar, Braised Chestnuts and Green Cabbage

Elements of a memorable Christmas dish



COUNTRY Pot Roast

WHAT you contribute to family potlucks this season can go a long way in each member's heart and mind along with their lifetime memories, or into the fridge or takeout bags. You need not worry about which dish to prepare. Tupperware Philippines has just the right recipe for you, along with this season's offer: the Elements 5.4L Casserole.

Made with Artech, the latest technology in heat distribution, the casserole has phenolic handles, which remain cool to the touch throughout the cooking. To make cooking faster, it also comes with a heat-resistant, tempered clear glass lid, allowing you to monitor the cooking progress; and a steam vent, which regulates the moisture of your dish.

All cookware products in the Elements line also have satin, scratch-free interior finish to prevent sticking. Sturdy and efficient, the Elements 5.4L Casserole allows you to prepare food enough for a five ravenous people. Try it out with this hearty dish this Christmas.

Country Pot Roast

1 kg rolled rump (beef)
1 tsp dried thyme leaves
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp ground black pepper
1 pc bay leaf
3 pcs cloves, whole
2 c dry red wine
4 tbsp brandy (optional)
3 tbsp salad oil
4 tbsp all-purpose flour
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp butter
1 pc onion (small), chopped
1 pc carrot (small), pared and chopped
4 c beef broth
1 c tomato sauce

Place meat in a large Tupperware bowl. Add thyme, garlic, black pepper, bay leaf and cloves. Pour in wine and oil. Cover. Marinate for 4 hours in room temperature or refrigerate for 2 days. Turn and spoon marinade over meat several times.

Remove meat from marinade. Pat dry. Rub with flour and salt. Heat butter in Elements 5.4L Casserole. Brown meat on all sides. Add onion, carrot and beef broth. Cover and braise for 3 to 3½ hours or until meat is tender. Add more broth if necessary. Remove meat and put on a platter to keep warm.

Strain liquid into Elements 24-cm sauté pan. Heat to boil. Boil rapidly until reduced to 2 cups. Slice the meat. Arrange meat slices on large serving platter. Spoon juice over meat. Top or garnish with buttered vegetables if desired.

Elements cookware is available through Tupperware Philippines (tels. 8885521/8454798; e-mail philmktng@tupperware.com).

How to cook a perfect pot of rice . . .

From page D1

1 tbsp chopped tomato
3-4 tbsp sliced ginger

Marinate *apahap* slices in ¼ c salt. Mix 1 c salt with rice gruel and, if desired, *angcac*. In a jar or crock, pack the fish, heads first, alternately with layers of rice, taking care to fill up air pockets. Top with *labong* or *nangka* leaves. Cover jar and store in a cool, dry and dark place for at least 10 days. To serve, sauté with garlic, onions, tomatoes, ginger. Serve over fried or grilled fish.

Could you please furnish me the recipe of steamed rice just like the one served at dimsums? For corn dog recipe, it mentioned cornmeal. Is this corn flakes?

LORIE VALENCIA

Cooking rice is perhaps one of the processes that we most take for granted. There's a fine line between great rice and mush. Do not despair, however. Below are guidelines and tips for making the perfect bowl of steamed rice.

Types of rice—Water required per 1 cup of rice:

Regular grain (most local varieties fall under this category) —1 ½ c
Basmati—1 ¾ c
Japanese or CalRose rice—1 ¾ c
Jasmine rice—1 ¾ c
Firm, long grain rice—2 c

Wash rice until water is clear, drain and add water as per table above. Some people add a bit of salt, oil, and in some cases, a dab of butter or a piece of *pandan* leaf.

Follow rice-cooker instructions. Using a rice cooker is still the best and safest way to cook rice. Once the rice is cooked, let it sit in the rice cooker for about 20 minutes to dry out. Close pan cover and heat on a stove till boiled.

If cooking rice in a saucepan, once water boils, reduce heat to low and stir rice gently for 1-2 minutes till water become thick and rice soft. Close cover and reduce heat till very low and let rice simmer for 2-3 minutes then off heat.

When rice is cooked, leave cover closed and let rice sit in the saucepan for another 10-15 minutes.

Rice cooking tips:

- Perfect rice should stick together. Under a bit of pressure though, it should fall apart and crumble. It should never be too sticky, with the exception of Japanese rice, of course.
- Rice cookers are always the best to use for cooking rice.
- If using a saucepan, use the thicker ones and try to avoid aluminum pans. Well, aluminum pans should always be avoided anyway.
- One trick that always works well for me is the Mount Fuji Method. This is done by measuring the water by the first bend/first line of your middle finger. The tip of your finger must touch the tip of the rice grains and the water must be by the line of your middle finger bend. Trivia has it that the measure of our finger bend, regardless our of our height, is the same for everyone.
- The Japanese also believe that the liquid used for cooking rice should never be brought to a boil; instead, very low heat is used throughout the process to reduce the loss of antioxidants found in the grain.
- I've also seen people, particularly in Europe, who cook rice as they do pasta, in a lot of water with a pinch of salt. The water is brought to a boil then the rice is added and cooked until the grains are soft then drained, butter is then added to the rice. The result of which is rice that resembles a pilaf, well separated and not a solid mass like what we often encounter when cooking rice done Asian household style.
- Another method is to literally use a bamboo steamer with a funnel-shaped pot to hold the water, as they do in some parts of Indonesia and Thailand.

Cornmeal, on the other hand, is not corn flakes but a yellow or white grainy powder made from yellow or white de-germed ground corn. It is used to make corn *tortillas* and cornbread.

E-mail the author at reggie1@skyinet.net

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4778 series of 2003

Consumers are now speaking up

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

MANY aggrieved consumers no longer prefer to grin and bear it rather than complain to establishments or government agencies. But they're also quick to show their appreciation when their complaints are resolved, as the following letters will prove.

Two subscribers of PLDT, C. Alano and lindab@wave.com.ph expressed their gratitude to the company for the prompt resolution of their complaints. Alano thanked PLDT for the prompt action on her request to replace their old telephone unit that had outlived its usefulness. The company also acted quickly on lindab's request to have her extension phone, which she no longer needed with the advent of cordless phone, disconnected. Now she doesn't have to pay P200 something for a unit that has become unnecessary.

R. C. Posadas of mirac_heal@yahoo.com wrote to us: "I complained to the Bureau of Trade and Consumer Protection (BTRCP) about my water service disconnection without proper prior notice from the utility company. Well, this is to report to you about the resolution of my complaint. I am grateful to BTRCP caretaker Jaime Lasaro L. Olmos and to Ramon B. Alikpala, executive director of the National Water Resources Board."

Gene Orejana sent us the good news that the complaint of a close kin, Lillibeth Vazquez Legasto, about her new vehicle did not fall on deaf ears. Orejana wrote, "She got her money back for the lemon vehicle she bought and also got a refund for the repair charges she had paid."

Nuisance telemarketers

Aggressive telemarketers have no qualms or ethics. They call up people at home or in the office anytime, unmindful if it is convenient or not. Just a few minutes ago, for instance, I picked up my ringing phone only to hear the automated sales jingle "Hey, you blah blah." And, to think that earlier, I had to deal with two phone calls from telemarketers offering upgrades of credit card service and an insurance plan. One wonders where these telemarketers get the telephone numbers and other private identity information of people.

Call it wishful thinking, but I hope the National Telecommunication Commission can come up with a system to stop these nuisance calls. It can be patterned after the national Do Not Call list system instituted by the United States Federal Trade Commission. It automatically bars telemarketers from calling people who have their phone numbers included in the national list. We were told that information on the system was available on the Internet at www.ftc.gov/donotcall.

Abusive driver

Is it any wonder driving in Manila has become a nightmare for foreigners? Here's a letter from a tourist who requested anonymity for obvious reasons. We're also withholding the plate number of the vehicle.

"We were traversing Quezon Boulevard and had stopped at the red light when at our back, there was this Ford Expedition vehicle with a private number plate that kept on sounding its deafening siren. Not content with the blaring noise he was making, the driver kept flashing the blinding bright blinkers. This driver has no sense of traffic decorum. Is it lawful for private citizens here to install siren and emergency blinkers?"

Unsatisfied Bench customer

N. Villamayor of winsomedaniel@hotmail.com related his exasperating experience while looking for his favorite Bench items at the store in Glorietta 4. He complained that the saleslady couldn't locate the items. What made it more difficult was the way items were displayed on hangers without labels. The disgusted customer left the store without buying anything.

He wrote: "It was different at the Bench store in Robinsons Galleria where items were arranged in a buyer-friendly system. These were displayed while still in their zip-lock plastic bags that had stickers indicating style description. I found the items right away without the assistance of a salesperson. I ended up buying several pieces of hipster-styled personal items."

Smart responds

M. Hizon griped that data on her cell phone's directory and message box were deleted when she had the phone upgraded during a Smart promo offer. Here's the response of Lyreen Barredo, Smart's supervisor at the center in SM North Edsa:

"We (at Smart Wireless Center) do not normally interfere with the subscriber's action (with regard to) their SIM cards. In Ms Hizon's case, we discussed with her the transfer of her phone book entries from her old SIM and her Nokia 8850 unit to her new SIM card that had a larger capacity. After careful verification that her mobile phone was capable [of] this transfer of entries and had sufficient memory capacity, we confidently offered our assistance for the transfer procedure, which she happily accepted."

Barredo added that the daughter of Ms Hizon checked the phonebook entries before leaving the center. She also explained that Smart Center employees were quite competent, having performed the procedure numerous times over the years. "The Hizons had the old and new SIM cards since July, why the complaint now?"

Expiry dates

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sent this comment on our column item on product expiry date: "DTI does not issue guidelines on product expiry dates, particularly foods, drugs, cosmetics and hazardous substances. These products are under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) of the Department of Health. You may get in touch with Josefa Lucero, chief of the Food Section, BFAD (tel. 8424538)."

E-mail the author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph

Business ideas for Christmas

THE MONTH of December offers great opportunities for a food business. So why not grab the chance to earn? With some early lessons from The Maya Kitchen Culinary Arts Center to prepare you, start a financially gainful enterprise this season.

Enroll in Certificate Course with Hands-On for Adults. The Cooking I course, for Messmen, Stewards and Beginners, is set until Dec. 5, Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Learn basic food preparation, cooking methods for vegetables, pasta, meats and poultry dishes.

Develop techniques of deboning chicken and fish, basic garnishing, table setting and napkin folding, actual preparation of popular Filipino and Oriental dishes. On the same dates but later time slots, 1:30-5 p.m., there's Cooking II class, Comprehensive Cooking for Career Cooks. There will be instructions on food hygiene and sanitation; standard techniques of preparing basic stocks, soups and sauces applicable to 1,001 recipes; salads and dressings; main dishes; potato cookery; pasta and rice; techniques of deboning and filleting fish and chicken; use of herbs and spices to cooking; basic garnish for plate and platter presentation. Free lunch will be served.

Visit Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays to Saturdays) at the 8/L, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati. Call 8921185, 8925011 local 108 or e-mail mayakitchen@pacific.net.com

34 Reasons to Celebrate

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Bargo's Combo Meals are back! Choose from eight savory meals served with rice, soup and iced tea for only P99.

THE BASEMENT
Party with "Top 7 House DJ of the World" Ricky Stone, Dec. 20, 10 PM onwards.

BAYO
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blue onion
Unwind to the beat of the hippest bands. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Call 421-1862 for details.

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Business Lunch Special for only P195+. Choice of Spareribs Adobo Rice, Hainanese Chicken Rice, Chuletas de Pollo, Hickory Pork Spareribs and Tenderloin Tips Saute. Complete with soup or salad and dessert.

CELADON Asian Restaurant
Enjoy our Dinner Buffet for only P300+. FREE stuffed toy for every group of eight diners.

CHICAGO
Try our new Roadhouse Deli featuring American-style sausages and smoked meat. No preservatives, no chemicals. Order now!

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Choose your own topping for our mouth-watering cheesecakes—from strawberry to raspberry, blueberry and mango. A must try!

KYO
Try our Jumbo Rice Toppings with FREE iced tea for only P99.

Discover why our Baked Rice Specials are the hottest meals in town! Choose from five delectable meals with free Lipton Iced Tea for only P95.

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Beat the rush and get your Mama Rosa Christmas Gift Baskets now! Your choice of bottled Filipino gourmet specialties like Spicy *Tuyo*, *Taba ng Talangka*, *Tableya Tsokolate* and more. Call 421-2476.

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For every P120 purchase, McCafe cardholders get FREE upsize of beverage, free pastry, free 350mL beverage and pastry on their 3rd, 6th and 10th stamps, respectively. Offer good until Dec. 31.

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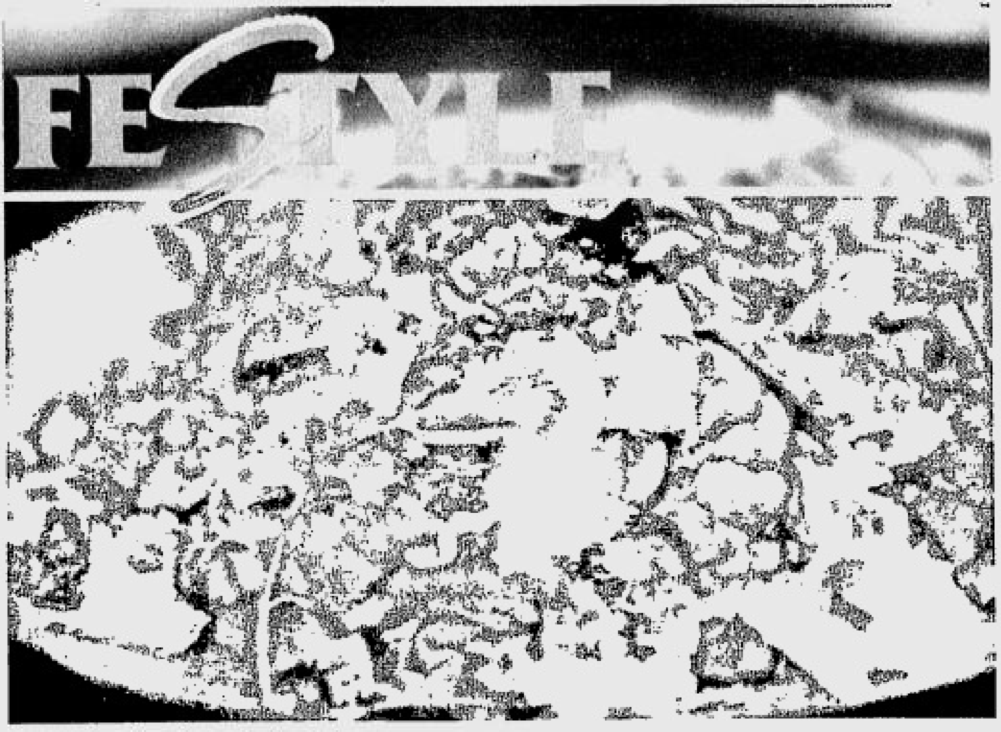
LIFESTYLE

A love affair with Old Vietnam


PRAWN, pork and grapefruit salad

Not happy with just two restaurants, DJ Montano has opened Annam, which serves authentic Vietnamese dishes

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

RESTAURATEUR DJ Montano remembers growing up imbibing the flavors and aromas of his late grandmother's cooking.

Virginia Montano's knowledge in the kitchen was perhaps as extensive as her foreign postings as a diplomat in her younger years. When she came home for good, she gave her impressionable grandson an idea of how good a cook she was.

Although his life is nowhere as tragic as Tita's, Montano likens himself to the heroine in Laura Esquivel's best-selling novel "Like Water for Chocolate." The kitchen, he says, was like his playground where he watched and learned from his granny how certain dishes were done.

Years later Montano put his culinary exposure to good use by opening a number of restaurants in Malate, the most recent of which is a Vietnamese restaurant named after an old city in Vietnam called Annam.

It was Jon Rufino, one of Montano's business partners, who thought of the name. The restaurant is now open for lunch and dinner.

"Some friends suggested to name the restaurant after 'Indochine,'" he says, referring to the French movie starring Catherine Deneuve, "but I found it too overused."

Beyond the typical

As far as dishes go, Montano also went beyond the typical Vietnamese spring rolls and bowl of hot noodles to include such entrees as prawn mousse on sugar cane (P280 per order), prawn, pork and grapefruit salad (P380), Vietnamese black cod in a hot pot (P280), stir-fried vegetables with lemon grass (P240), mixed vegetable curry (P240) and

A LOVE/ E2

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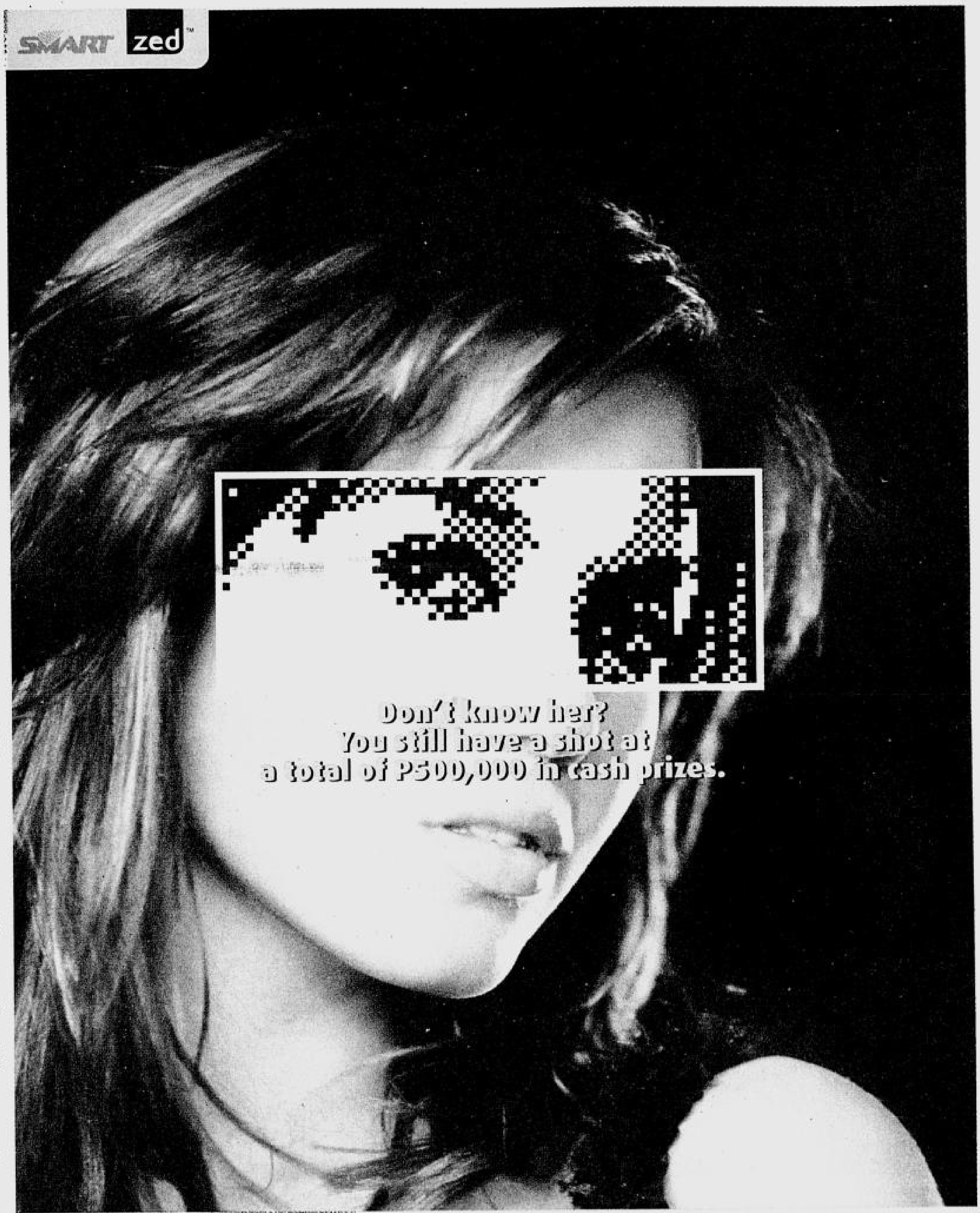
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Per DTI-NCR permit number 3737 series of 2003. See flyers for more details.

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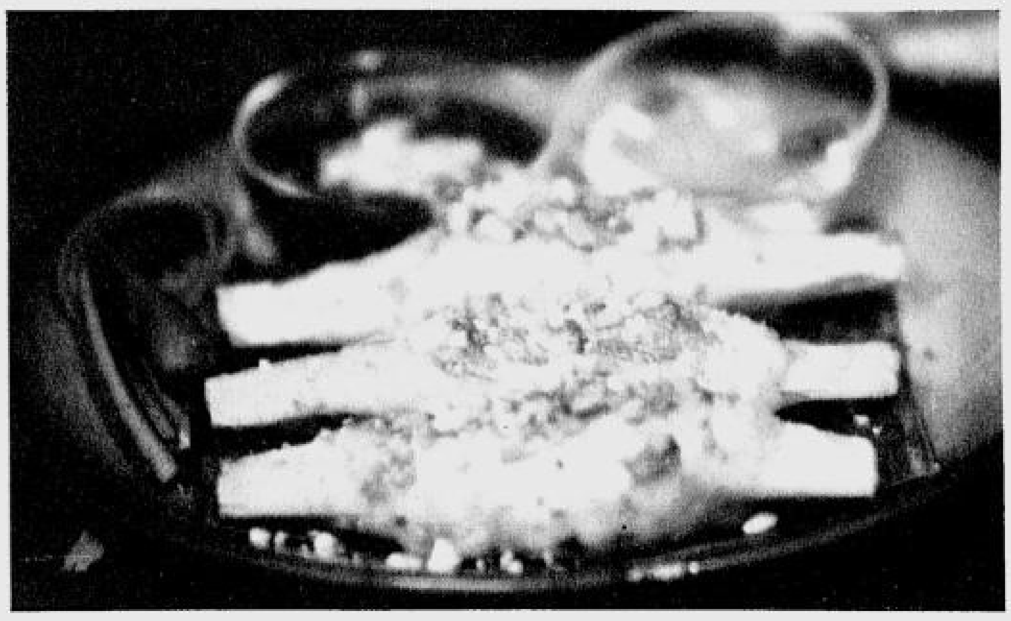
VIETNAMESE fried rice



PRAWN mousse on sugarcane

A love affair with Old Vietnam

DJ Montano and his Saigon surprise

VIETNAMESE black cod in a hot pot

From page E1

spicy tofu and broccoli (P220).

"Both our Vietnamese and Filipino clients have given the dishes high marks," he says. "Vietnamese find them authentic, while Filipinos are starting to acquire a taste especially for the spicy items."

To keep the dishes as authentic as possible, he imports a number of ingredients such as seaweed, cod, rice paper and even fish sauce directly from Vietnam. The seaweed, for instance, only grows in the colder waters of northern Vietnam. Montano has had to restyle several dishes himself to make them more visually appealing especially to clueless Filipinos.

"I've always loved Vietnamese food," says Montano, who took up hotel and restaurant management at the famed Le Roche in Switzerland soon after finishing a degree in international studies at the De La Salle University. "My grandmother taught me well to appreciate the many fine nuances of good food."

But it was only when he lived in Paris, where he further honed his culinary skills at the Le Cordon Bleu (the same school where Audrey Hepburn's character in the film "Sabrina" earned her chops), that Montano's love affair with Vietnamese cooking was rekindled. He resided in a section of the city teeming with Vietnamese immigrants.

"Such was my attraction to Vietnamese cuisine, that I resolved to myself to put up a Vietnamese restaurant as soon as I returned to Manila," he says.

Chef search

Montano's dream, however, has had to wait for three years as he scoured Metro Manila in search of the ideal chef. In the meantime, he opened the bar Acquario and and the Indian food restaurant Raj in a compound near the corner of Maria Orosa and Julio Nakpil Streets he calls the Courtyard.

His search finally ended early this year when he heard of Phuong Mai Bautista, a Vietnamese woman now married to a Filipino, from photographer Neil Oshima. She owns and manages a canteen serving Vietnamese food in Parañaque. Montano decided to give her dishes a try.

"At last I found the person I was looking for," he says. "Her cooking is authentic and by far the best I've tasted. I practically begged on my knees to convince her to be my chef."

Bautista eventually agreed, but not after Montano promised to give her enough time to attend to her canteen. She works most days of the week at Annam, and makes it a point to fly to Vietnam every three months to personally source for ingredients. Thanks to her, Annam will soon be serving authentic Vietnamese red wine (yes, they now have vineyards over there) called Du Ong.

"Her regular trips to Vietnam not only enables her to refresh her taste," says Montano, "they also keep her rooted."

Contemporary

Annam, which can seat close to 30 people, may be small, but it didn't limit interior designer Jim Tan from coming up with an interesting mix of furniture and accent pieces that are minimalist, but far from boring and traditional. Montano calls the look "Vietnam contemporary."

The celadon-colored walls with red piping, for instance, are devoid of artworks. Vietnam-style gold brocade livens up the otherwise subdued brown upholstery, while moldings inspired by a style indigenous to the country add texture to the place. So-called 3-D tables are actually glass-topped counters with framed faux lotus arrangements underneath.

"I call them do-it-yourself tables," says a beaming Montano, who helped design the arrangements. "Each arrangement is unlike the other."

And unlike in most Vietnamese restaurants, not a single waitress at Annam wears an ao dai. For Montano, making his staff wear traditional garb would have been too "Indochine" for comfort.

Annam is located at 1820 Maria Orosa Street, Malate, Manila. Call 5254858.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

VIETNAM contemporary interiors by Jim Tan

THE COURTYARD for those who want to dine al fresco

Cooking classes for holidays

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts has released its cooking class schedules until Dec. 15.

Dec. 5 (Friday): Reggie's Christmas Roasts (all new, special class): succulent roasts—Beer Brined Roast Chicken, Whole Roast Young Duckling in Coffee Sauce, Honey Brined Pork Loin, Fresh Cured Whole Leg of Ham with Sweet Sugar Glaze, Roast Turkey with Candied Yams and Shiitake Mushrooms, Angus Roast Beef Belly with two sauces; soup, salad, side dishes and desserts (P2,800 + ingredients)

Dec. 6 (Saturday): French-Filipino Fusion: Smoked Gindara Served with Tomatoes and Bagoong Rissoto, Warm Langka Baked Cheesecake in Chilled Cucumber Capuccino, Brown Sea Scallop Served with Talangka Risotto and Watercress Sauce and Crispy Alamang, Royale of Smoked Prawns in Pomodoro Sinigang, Maluggay Souffle with Mango and Carabao Milk Veloute and Upo Chip, Fresh Pandan Crepe Lumpia Stuffed with Salmon and Vegetables, Lamb Shank Kare-Kare with Honey Mint Bagoong Sauce, Braised Vegetables and Couscous, Mixed Camote Cream and Crisp Root Vegetables, Cappuccino or Mongo Soup with Garlic Longganisa and Duck Confit, Bangus Belly Tatin with Garlic and Onion Marmalade and Crispy Potatoes Scented with Truffle Oil, Roasted Duck Liver with Adobo Rillette of Duck Breast on French Toasted Pandesal (P2,800 + ingredients)

Dec. 8 (Monday): Ultimate Chocolate Collection: Chocolate Cakes with Soft Chocolate Centers and Caramel Coulis, Double Chocolate Cake, Triple Chocolate, Praline and Mascarpone Cake, Warm Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Nut Brittle

Dec. 10 (Wednesday): Authentic Favorites from All Over the World (new, part 1): Boiled Corned Beef with Horseradish, Succulent Pot Roast, Russian Beef Stroganoff with Homemade Noodles, Chicken a La Kiev with Kiev Rice, Moroccan Style Lamb Stew with Couscous. Bonus: Hainanese Chicken Rice with Homemade Chili Sauce

Dec. 12 (Friday): All New Fondues: cheese (two kinds), meat, chicken and seafood with at least 12 savory fondue sauces

Dec. 13 (Saturday): Crabs, Prawns and Steamed Fish: Than Long Crabs, Crabs with Crab Fat and Butter Sauce, Crabs with Black Beans, Than Long Crabs, Grilled/Steamed Fish done two ways (classic and my way), Grilled Prawns with three dipping sauces

Dec. 15 (Monday): Gourmet Breakfast (all new, special class): pancake and waffle bar (learn six different variations with all new homemade syrups and fruit sauces, breakfast steaks and sausages, egg variations—omelettes and scrambled gourmet style, breakfast casserole, fruit juices—over 14 recipes). (P2,800 + ingredients)

All cooking and baking classes start promptly at 1 p.m. Fee: P1,500 per session, excluding ingredients. Call 9289296/9273008 and look for Cynthia or 6335162/6474744 and look for Julius.

Holiday treats are now available by order only: Mini Liquor Cake Pack—Bourbon, Whisky Grand Marnier and Wine Cake, P400; Mini Rum Cake Gift Pack—Mixed Nut, Dalandan, Chocolate Truffle and Apple Banana, P400; Individual Liqour Cakes, P400; Reggie's Classic Christmas Killer Caramel Fudge Cake, P275 (standard can, minimum 1 dozen); Reggie's Classic Christmas Killer Caramel Fudge Cake, P175 (bottle, minimum 1 dozen); Sinfully Gooey Food for the Gods, P400 per can; Salmon and Caviar Cake, P1,000; Delicious Butter Bread, P375.

A fine selection of Christmas dishes-to-go are also now available.

Homemade 'kakanin' with hot chocolate

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

INTEREST in native cakes, commonly known as *kakanin*, is always renewed as soon as December sets in. Blame it on the weather, the Christmas carols and the blinking *parols*.

Here we have *ube haleya*, cassava *bibingka* and hot chocolate to go with them. Serve them during the holidays or prepare them for gift-giving.

Haleyang Ube

½ kg *ube* (purple yam), washed, peeled and cut into chunks
300 ml can full-cream condensed milk
370 ml can full-cream evaporated milk
1/8 to ¼ tsp *ube* food color
pinch of sodium benzoate (optional)
grated cheddar cheese

Boil the *ube* until tender. Mash with a fork. Transfer the cooked *ube* to a large pan. Pour in condensed milk, evaporated milk and sodium benzoate (a preservative). Mix well and add food color. Place over low medium heat and cook, stirring constantly until thick. Transfer to a dish lined with banana leaves and top with grated cheddar cheese.

Mom's Cassava Bibingka

4 c grated cassava
1 coconut, grated
1 ½ c warm water
¼ c melted butter or margarine
3 whole eggs
2 c white sugar
1 tsp fine salt
½ tsp pure vanilla extract
wilted banana leaves
Caramel topping:
300 ml can full-cream condensed milk
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 egg yolks
1 c grated quickmelt cheese

Line the bottom of an ovenproof dish with wilted banana leaves. Set aside.

In a large bowl, combine warm water and grated coconut. Mix well, then squeeze out the milk. You should have a total of 2 c coconut milk. If the amount is not adequate, add some water. Pour into a bowl and add the remaining ingredients for the *bibingka*. Mix well with a rubber scraper. Pour into the prepared baking pan and bake at 350ºF for 1 hour.

In a thick saucepan, combine the condensed milk, flour and egg yolks. Mix well and cook over low heat until it thickens. Pour over the baked *bibingka* and spread from end to end. Top with grated quickmelt cheese.

Increase the oven temperature to 375ºF. Bake the *bibingka* with the topping for 20-25 minutes more or until the caramel has set.

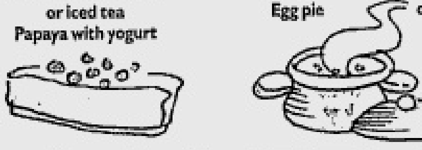
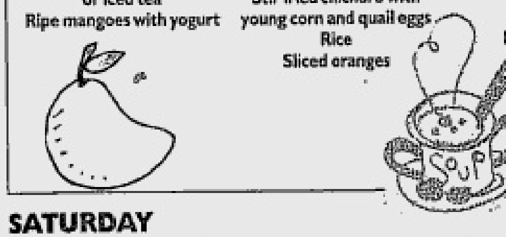
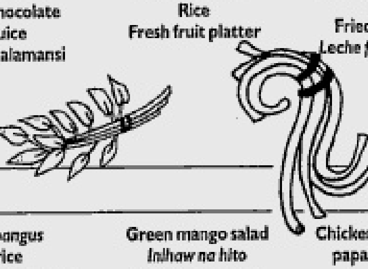
Hot Chocolate

1 pc chocolate *tablea*
½ c full-cream evaporated milk
½ c water
muscovado sugar to taste

Break the *tablea* into pieces. Place into a saucepan and pour in milk and water. Place over low heat and allow to boil and then simmer until the chocolate has melted. Stir from time to time. Add sugar to taste.

For a frothy chocolate, transfer the mixture to a tall pitcher and beat with a wooden *batidor*.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating lessons at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothycookingschool@yahoo.com

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Cereal and milk Ham and cheese omelette Pandesal Coffee, chocolate or fruit juice	Chicken curry Eggplant salad Rice *Nata de coco*	Pork *adobo* with pineapple tidbits Stir-fried string beans with carrots Rice Papaya with *calamansi*
TUESDAY	Oatmeal Vienna sausage Loaf bread Butter and cheese spreads Coffee or iced tea Bananas with cottage cheese	Steamed fish Garlic *kangkong* Rice Cassava *bibingka*	Clear soup *Sotanghon guisado* Garlic bread *Mais con hielo*
WEDNESDAY	Hotcake with butter and maple syrup Honeycured bacon Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Papaya with yogurt	*Sinigang na baka* with *labanos* and Chinese *kangkong* Rice Egg pie	Onion soup Roast chicken Russian salad Watermelon wedges or fresh watermelon shake 
THURSDAY	Tuna sandwich Soft boiled eggs Coffee, hot chocolate or carrot juice Melon with cottage cheese	Clam soup with *misua* noodles *Paksiw na tilapia* *Gisadong ampalaya* Rice *Minatamis na saba*	*Pancit canton* *Lumpiang shanghai* with sweet and sour sauce Fruit cocktail with crushed ice
FRIDAY	Chicken hotdog sandwich Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Ripe mangoes with yogurt	Fried quail or spring chicken with *kropeck* Stir fried *chicharo* with young corn and quail eggs Rice Sliced oranges	Cream of mushroom soup Coleslaw salad Meat loaf Rice Fruit gelatin 
SATURDAY	Cassava *bibingka* Pan grilled ham Coffee, hot chocolate or fruit juice Papaya with calamansi	*Adobong pusit* *Gisadong sitaw* Rice Fresh fruit platter	Tossed greens with thousand island dressing Paella Fried chicken wings *Leche flan* with *haleyang ube* 
SUNDAY	*Daing na bangus* Garlic rice Tomato salad with *wansoy* Fried eggs Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Fresh fruit platter	Green mango salad *Inihaw na hito* *Inihaw na liempo* *Halabos na hipon* *Pandan* rice *Gulaman at sago*	Chicken *tinola* with green papaya and sili leaves Rice Fresh fruit platter

Hunt for the wedge

TO help practical moms and homemakers in coming up with great holiday dishes at reasonable prices, Hunt's, the tomato expert, offers a value-for-money promo and practical recipes for Christmas.

Hunt's is giving a P1 discount on purchase of Hunt's Tomato or Spaghetti Sauce in tetra wedge pack.

Hunt's Tomato Sauce comes in Traditional and Filipino Style flavors, and Hunt's Spaghetti Sauce, in Traditional, Parmesan Cheese, Spicy Italian and Mushroom flavors.

"Cooking with Sandy Daza" on ABC 5 every Saturday at 9 a.m. features cooking with Hunt's.

The Hunt's wedge pack promo runs until Dec. 31, and is available at leading supermarkets and groceries nationwide.

SANDY Daza's show on ABC 5 features cooking with Hunt's.

Catering seminar set

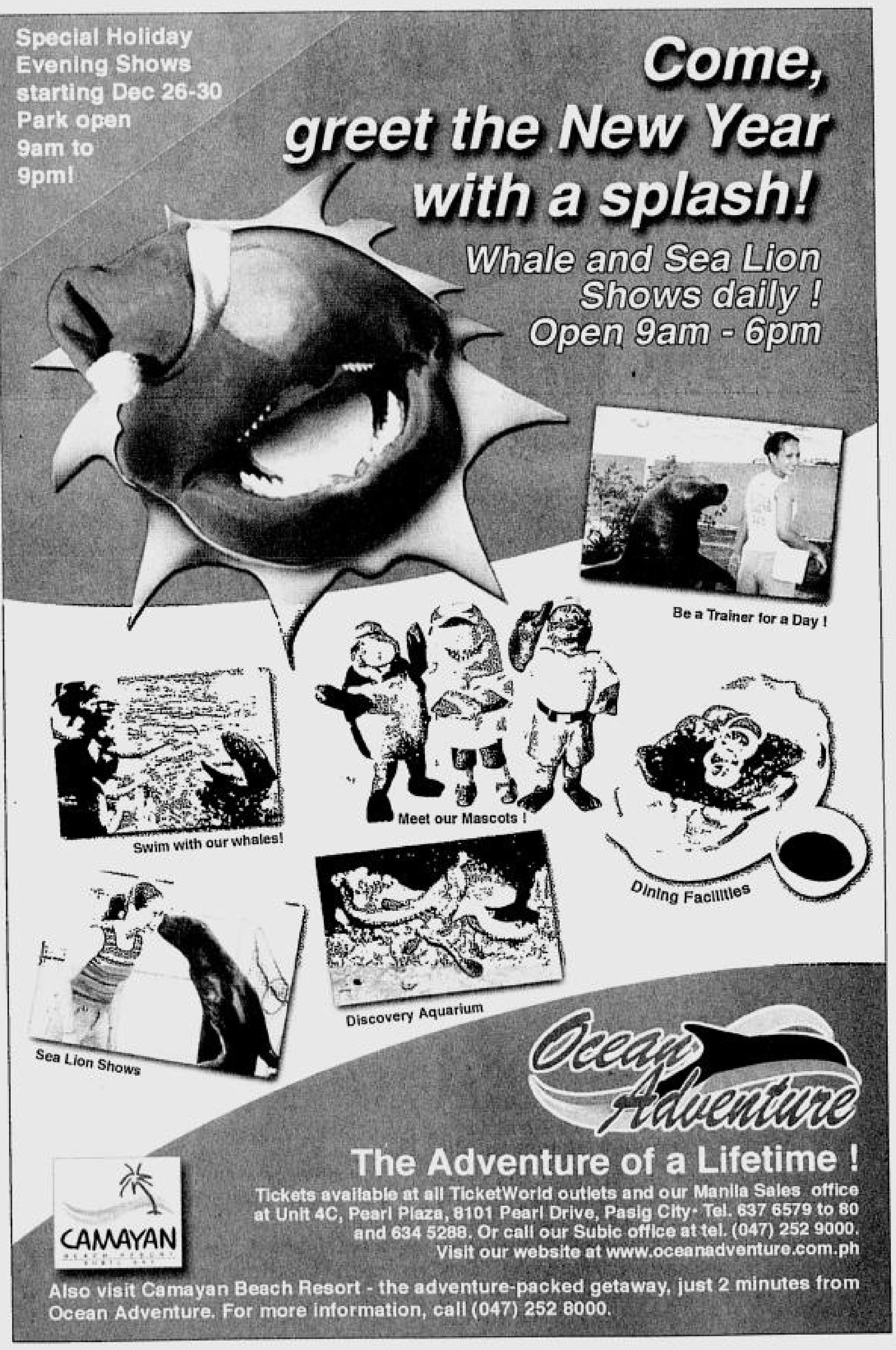
CATERERS, restaurateurs and others planning to start or manage a catering business are invited by ProActive Center for Training (PACT) to its Managing a Catering Business Seminar-Workshop on Dec. 8-17, 1- 5 p.m., at Ipanema Bar and Restaurant, 2/L Eastwood City Walk, Libis, Quezon City.

The eight-day training will feature lectures and hands-on workshops on legal requirements for a food establishment; planning the menu, equipment and staffing; cost control; room arrangements; napkin folding and table skirting, among others.

Trainers are food-service consultants and professors of hotel and restaurant management, who are award-winning coaches of the student division in Chefs on Parade.

Reservations are currently being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Call 7876370 or 0916-8226053.

Only 20 participants will be accepted. Seminar fee is P4,500, inclusive of field trip to food and equipment suppliers and a restaurant visit, manual and handouts, snacks, certificate of completion, and workshop materials and equipment.



Special Holiday Evening Shows starting Dec 26-30 Park open 9am to 9pm!

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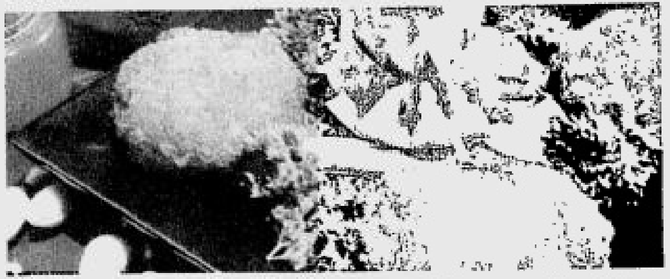
Chinese restaurant opens new outlet in QC

DINING OUT

SUPER BOWL of China opens its new branch at the 2/L SM City North Edsa. It also offers dim sum (Steamed Pork Ribs with Taosi, Hakao, Steamed Pork Siu Mai, Steamed Shark's Fin Dumpling) noodles (Crispy Noodles with Assorted Seafood and Braised Birthday Noodles), rice toppings (Lapu-Lapu Fillet with Taosi on Rice, Assorted Seafood on Rice, Sweet and Sour Pork on Rice), chicken, pork and seafood dishes.



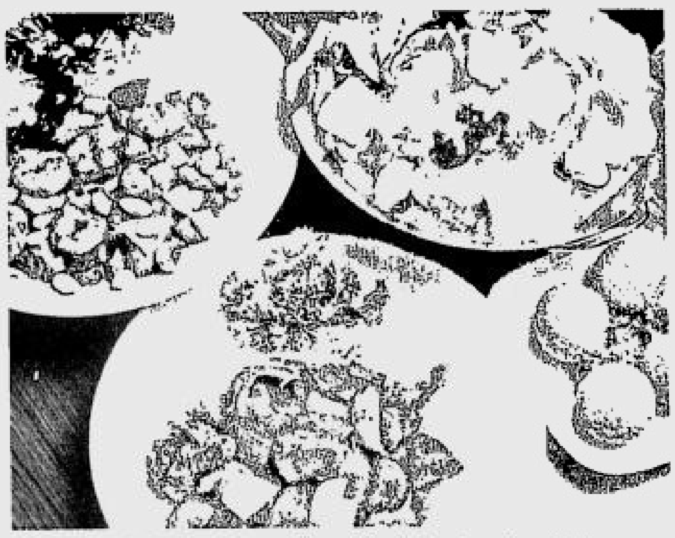
GLOBAL CAFE offers Thai food like soups, salads, curry dishes and shrimp cakes. Global Cafe by Store Super is located at the G/F Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 8135839/8929535. In photo is the Thai Shrimp Cakes

NURTURE Tropical Spa and Cafe in Tagaytay City offers Asian fusion dishes like Chili Shrimp a la Nurture, Shrimp and Vegetable Crepe, Seafood Orientale, Nurture Hot Noodles, Hot and Sour Shrimp Delight, Queen Nurture and Oriental Delight. Call (046) 4130804/05.

THE SULO Hotel's Cafe Paraiso features Holiday Buffet from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Dishes include Braised Beef in Whole Knuckle in Red Wine Sauce, Poached Fish Fillet with Julienne Vegetables, Shredded Beef with Curry Sauce and Roast Pork Belly with Lime and Ginger Sauce. Call 9245051 to 71.

EDSA Shangri-La's Garden Cafe introduces a la carte selections such as crispy fried pork loin with sweet and sour sauce, char-grilled tofu and eggplant skewers with garlic-chili glaze, salmon cheek and belly cooked in miso soup with mustard leaves, lamb cutlets, US prime beef tenderloin, rib eye, king prawns and salmon. Call 6347373/6338888.

TEQUILA JOE'S Restaurant and Bar features new dishes such as Macho Taquitos, Mariscos Rojos and Mushroom Surprise, Wasabi and Toasted Sesame Salad and Fisherman's Salad, Viva Anchovy, 4x Pizza, Fish Fillet sandwich, Tex Mex Platter, Marinara, Black Capone pasta, Blanket Prawns, Ala Pobre, French Apple Pie, Mangoes and Cream, Smooth Belgian Choco Cake and Frozen Cranapple Surprise. Tequila Joe's has outlets at El Pueblo, Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center, Tomas Morato, Malate and Ayala Center, Cebu.

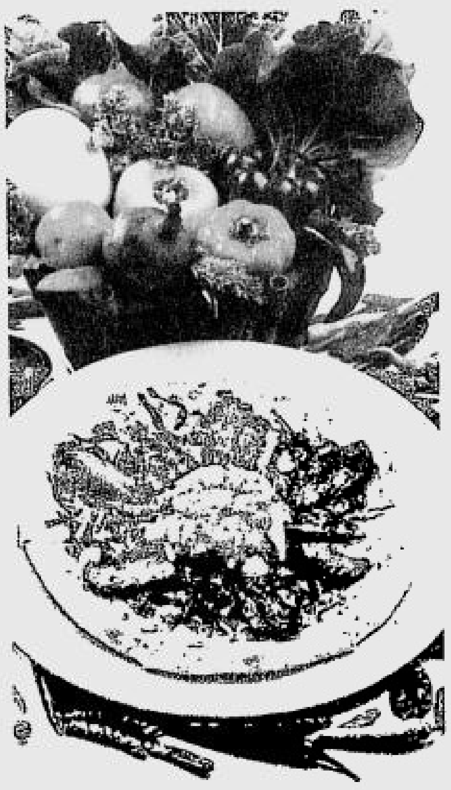


SUPER Bowl of China's bestsellers: (clockwise, from top left) Szechuan Prawns, Crispy Noodles with assorted seafood, deep-fried sesame ball and sweet and sour pork

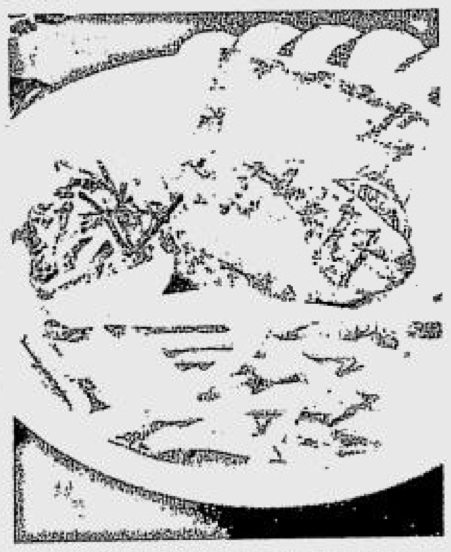
KENNY Rogers Roasters opened three new outlets in Imus, Lucena and Dagupan. The home of the original roasted chicken also offers Kenny's Chops, flavored muffins and Kenny's Krispy Chicken. Kenny Rogers also has branches in SM City Marilao, SM City Baguio, NE Pacific Mall, Cabanatuan City and Limketkai Mall in Cagayan de Oro.

POPEYES Chicken and Biscuits offers Snack Saver Meals for P45. It includes New Orleans-Style Fried Chicken, rice and a drink. Popeyes has outlets at SM Southmall, Robinsons Metro East, New Farmers Plaza, Robinsons Galleria, Filinvest Festival Mall-Alabang, Greenhills Shopping Center, SM Bicutan, Greenbelt 1 and SM Pampanga.

MANILA Pavilion Hotel's Patisserie presents Brandied Gingerbread Cake for December. Call 5261212.



CALIFORNIA Pizza Kitchen is giving away free pizzas. Dine in at any CPK outlet and for every purchase of P1,000 or more, CPK will give you a free Carne Asado coupon for use on your next visit. Promo is valid for dine-in customers only and will run up to Dec. 15. CPK has branches at Tomas Morato, Shangri-La Plaza, Glorietta 3 and Alabang Town Center.



TEQUILA Joe's fish fillet, grilled fish fillet richly marinated in a sweet chili sauce and set between a sourdoug baguette finished with tartar

EDSA Shangri-La Garden Cafe' s salmon cheek and belly in miso soup

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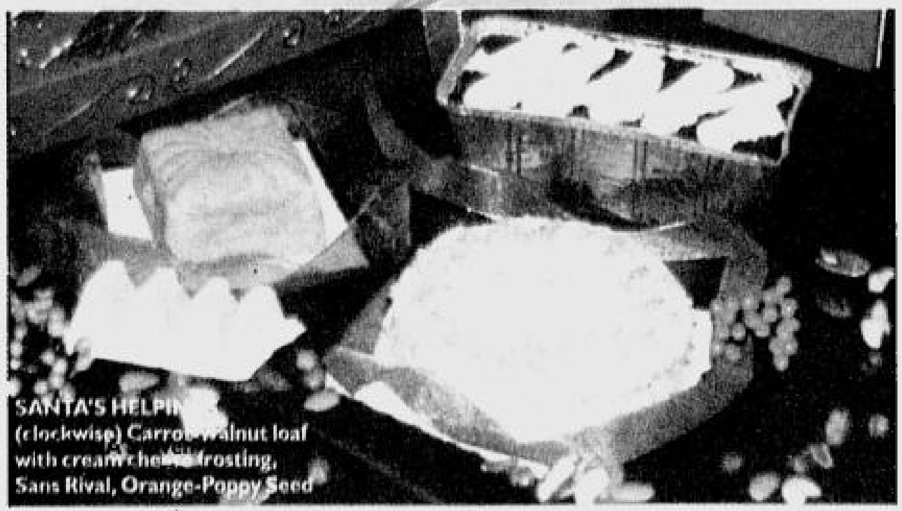
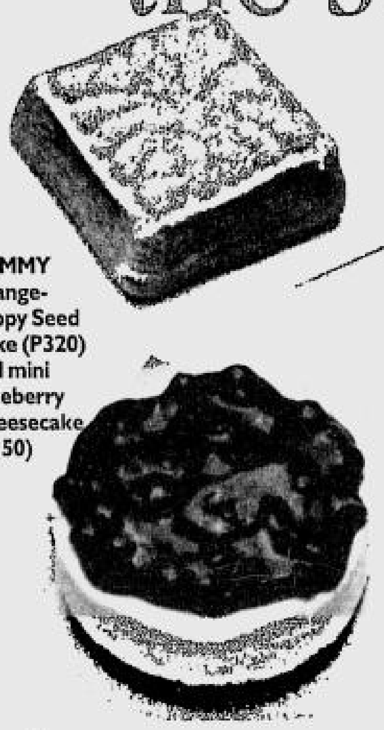


SANTA'S HELPINGS (clockwise) Carrot walnut loaf with cream cheese frosting, Sans Rival, Orange-Poppy Seed

Gifts to sweeten the season



YUMMY Orange-Poppy Seed Cake (P320) and mini Blueberry Cheesecake (P150)

DESPITE what they say about fruitcakes, baked treats are still tops for gift-giving this Christmas. Cakes and celebrations go together after all. And pastries are easy on the budget.

Martha's Oven offers two sizes—and two prices—for its to-drool-for Blueberry Cheesecake (P150/ P550); Sans Rival (P200/P550); Orange-Poppy Seed Cake (P80/P220); Rum Cake (P120/P320); Banana Walnut Loaf (P90/P130); Carrot Walnut Loaf (P120/P230); and Carrot Walnut loaf with cream-cheese frosting (P200/P300)—all in festive Christmas gift boxes.

Other gift ideas for pennywise Santas include Chewy Fudge Brownies (P170 per box), Mini Moist Chocolate Cake (P100) and Russian Tea Cakes (P120).

For a minimum order of P1,000, Martha's Oven will deliver to Makati, QC, Pasig, Marikina and Cainta. Or orders may be picked up at Timeless Accents, 114 E Rodriguez Avenue, Ugong, Pasig, along C5. Call 6828085.

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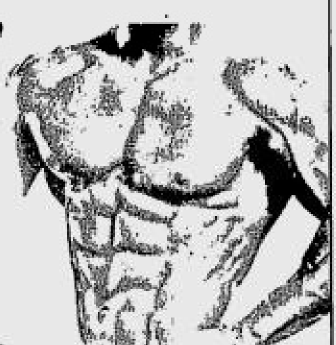

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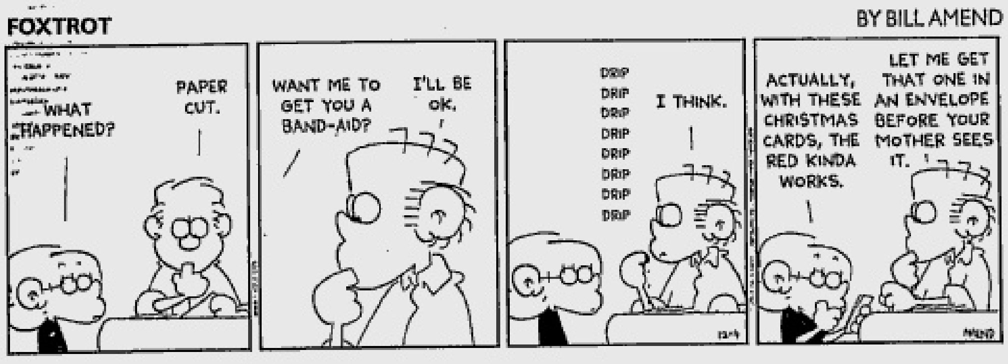
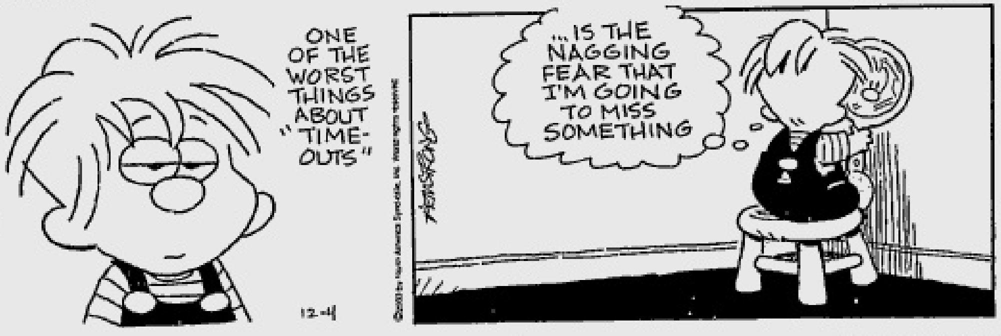
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT HAPPENED?
PAPER CUT.
WANT ME TO GET YOU A BAND-AID?
I'LL BE OK.
DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP
I THINK.
ACTUALLY, WITH THESE CHRISTMAS CARDS, THE RED KINDA WORKS.
LET ME GET THAT ONE IN AN ENVELOPE BEFORE YOUR MOTHER SEES IT.
12-4

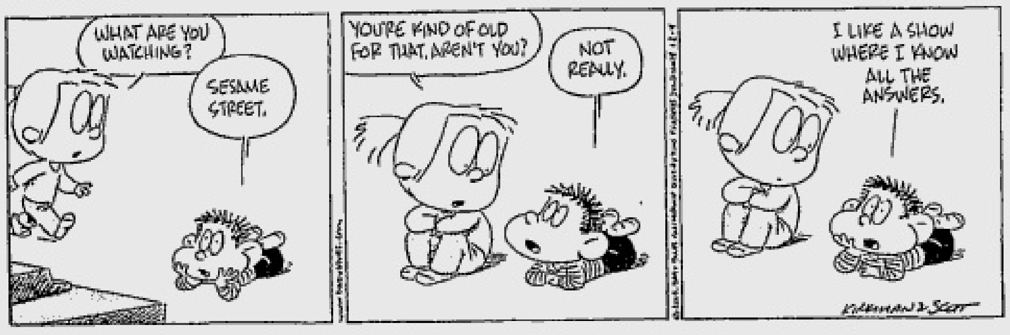
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


ONE OF THE WORST THINGS ABOUT "TIME-OUTS"
12-4
...IS THE NAGGING FEAR THAT I'M GOING TO MISS SOMETHING
ARMSTRONG

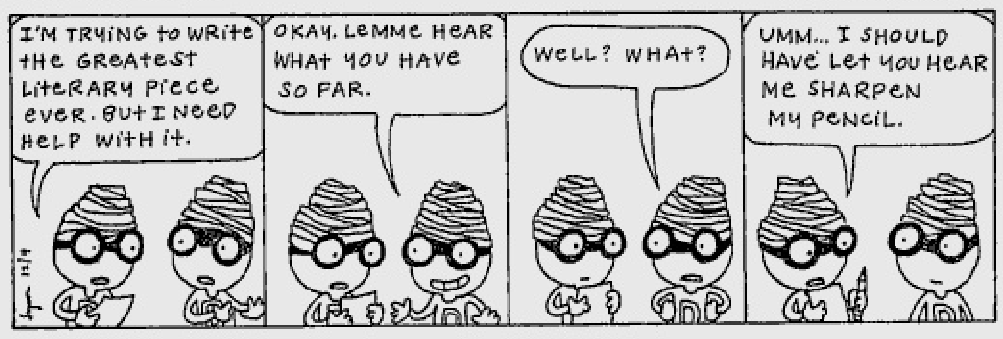
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?
SESAME STREET.
YOU'RE KIND OF OLD FOR THAT, AREN'T YOU?
NOT REALLY.
I LIKE A SHOW WHERE I KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'M TRYING to WRITE tHE GREAtESt LitERARY PiECE EVER. BUt I NEED HELP WItH it.
OKAY. LEMME HEAR WHAt YOU HAVE SO FAR.
WELL? WHAt?
UMM... I SHOULD HAVE LEt YOU HEAR ME SHARPEN MY PENCIL.
12/4

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY You are both daring and confident. Your belief in yourself is one of your strengths. Since you are capable of great achievements, this self-confidence is justified. Important changes might take place this year -- changes as significant as those in 1995.

Birthdate of: Walt Disney, animator/entertainment-empire builder; Frankie Muniz, actor; Little Richard, R & B singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) It's important keep in mind that your job can improve enormously this coming year. The extent to which this can happen depends on your faith that it is possible.

TAURUS(April 20 to May 20) New love might come your way today, next week or early next year. The bluebird of happiness is definitely smiling on you. Enjoy it while it lasts.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Do whatever you can to promote your family, your home scene and real estate. This advantage will not come again for 12 years. Fortunately, it lasts for another nine months.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) From the thought springs the word. From the word springs the deed. The deed hardens into habit, and habit becomes character. Therefore, watch your thoughts with care.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) Now and in the next eight months, you have a wonderful opportunity to boost your earnings. Make this your personal goal.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Once every 12 years Jupiter comes into your sign. That time is now. This blessing will last until September 2004. Make hay while the sun shines!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) You're thinking about a lot. You're also working hard. That's because this is an important time in your life. For that reason, get your rest and give yourself a chance to calm your mind.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) This is the perfect day to buy wardrobe items or beautiful things for yourself or loved ones. Whatever you get will probably be of good quality and last for a long time.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) Accept invitations from others. This is a lovely day to socialize and celebrate. You're finally pulling it all together at home.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) This is good day to negotiate, wheel and deal, and sign contracts. You have the drive and energy necessary to make things happen successfully for you.

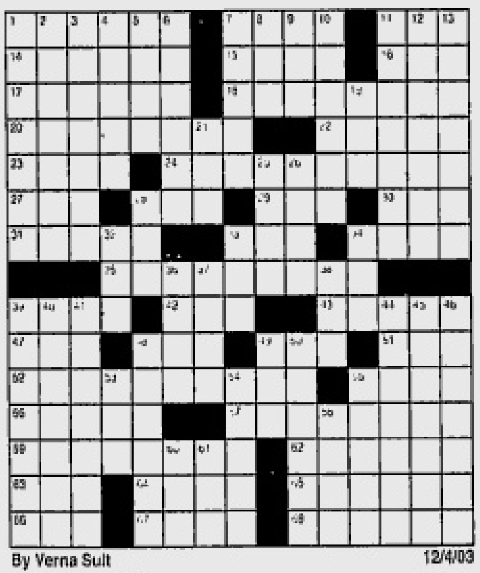
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) A friend might have a good tip about a job for you. Alternately, this person might help you in some other way. Be open to favors coming to you now. Accept them.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) It's important to get more exercise now. Mars has been in your sign for months, causing a buildup of energy and tension within you. It needs somewhere to go!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Blethyn or Fricker
7 Numbskull
11 Sis or bro
14 Alleviation
15 People of "The Time Machine"
16 Balin or Claire
17 Start of a quip
18 Unproductive state
20 Cross-examining
22 Force units
23 Spaces
24 Part 2 of quip
27 UFO pilots
28 One of Noah's sons
29 Came in first
30 ABA member
31 Tractor maker
33 Lid
34 Off. underling
35 Part 3 of quip
39 Virginia senator Charles
42 Significant period
43 __ Filipinas
47 TV Tarzan Ron
48 Contingencies
49 Disorderly hair
51 Nabokov novel
52 Part 4 of quip
55 Roman historian
56 Egg-shaped
57 Nightstand sites
59 Capital of Manitoba
62 End of quip
63 WSW opposite
64 Half of Mork's sign-off
65 Wake up
66 __ Moines
67 James Bond's alma mater
68 Tours neighbor



By Verna Suit
Silver Spring, MD

12/4/03

DOWN

1 Talked boastfully
2 Put back in the big box
3 Plane curve
4 Aage __ Bohr
5 Good buy
6 Chad's continent
7 Condescend
8 Like a fossil
9 Chat-room laughter letters
10 Related
11 Brown pigments
12 Bugs
13 Actress Angela
19 Louis or Carrie
21 __ de plume
25 Thwack
26 Egyptian Christian
28 "For __ a jolly good..."
32 Kid
33 Rebs' nation
34 DDE opponent
36 Goldblum of "The Fly"
37 Star bear
38 With it
39 Seeded again
40 Chrysolite
41 Past grievances
44 Expended
45 "Anthony __"
46 Gives the go-ahead
48 First-aid topical
49 West or Murray
50 Dinner party stag
53 Diarist Anais
54 Unrestricted weapon
55 Choreographer Jose
58 Evening in Torino
60 Writer Conroy
61 Rock composer Brian

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

R	I	T	Z	■	D	A	T	A	■	J	A	P	E	S
A	C	R	E	■	A	D	A	M	■	E	N	T	R	E
G	U	Y	D	E	M	A	U	P	A	S	S	A	N	T
■	■	■	■	S	P	I	T	■	Q	U	E	■	■	■
S	P	E	A	K	E	R	■	G	U	I	L	D	E	R
H	A	M	L	I	N	■	G	R	I	T	■	A	X	E
A	L	B	O	M	■	O	R	A	L	■	A	S	H	Y
■	M	A	N	O	F	L	A	M	A	N	C	H	A	■
B	A	S	E	■	A	D	D	S	■	E	M	I	L	E
O	T	S	■	P	L	I	E	■	S	E	E	K	E	R
K	E	Y	H	O	L	E	■	B	E	D	S	I	D	E
■	■	■	E	M	O	■	B	I	L	L	■	■	■	■
F	E	L	L	O	W	T	R	A	V	E	L	E	R	S
L	E	M	O	N	■	N	I	L	E	■	A	R	I	A
Y	E	N	T	A	■	T	O	Y	S	■	X	R	A	Y

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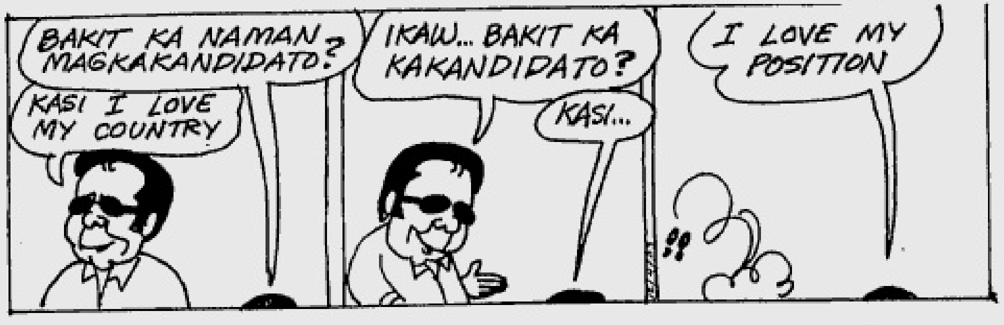
12/4/03

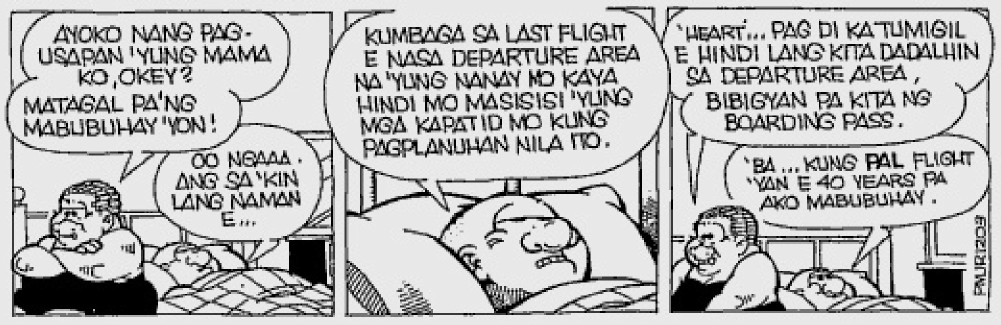
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT KA NAMAN MAGKAKANDIDATO?
KASI I LOVE MY COUNTRY
IKAW... BAKIT KA KAKANDIDATO?
KASI...
I LOVE MY POSITION

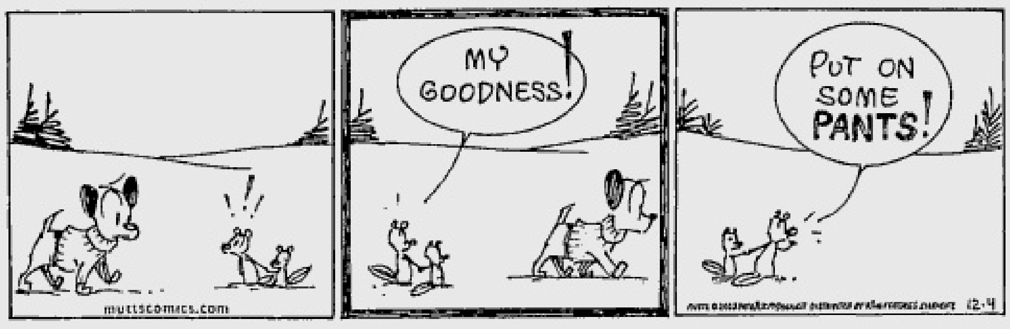
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AYOKO NANG PAG-USAPAN 'YUNG MAMA KO, OKEY? MATAGAL PA'NG MABUBUHAY 'YON!
OO NGAAA. ANG SA'KIN LANG NAMAN E...
KUMBAGA SA LAST FLIGHT E NASA DEPARTURE AREA NA 'YUNG NANAY MO KAYA HINDI MO MASISISI 'YUNG MGA KAPATID MO KUNG PAGPLANUHAN NILA ITO.
'HEART'... PAG DI KA TUMIGIL E HINDI LANG KITA DADALHIN SA DEPARTURE AREA, BIBIGYAN PA KITA NG BOARDING PASS.
'BA... KUNG PAL FLIGHT 'YAN E 40 YEARS PA AKO MABUBUHAY.
PMJR1203

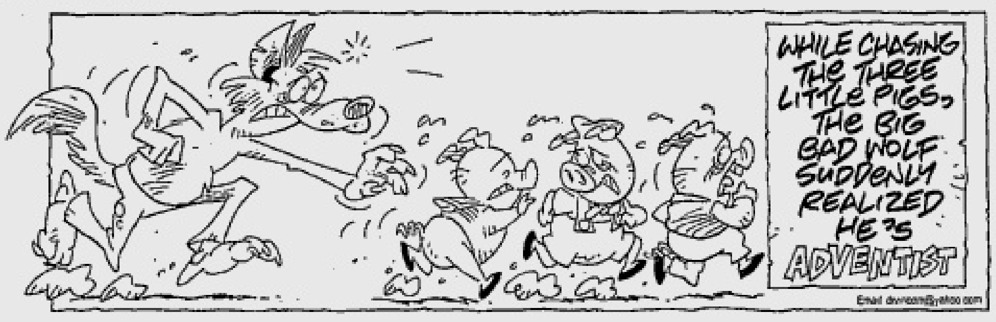
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MY GOODNESS!
PUT ON SOME PANTS!
muttscomics.com
12-4

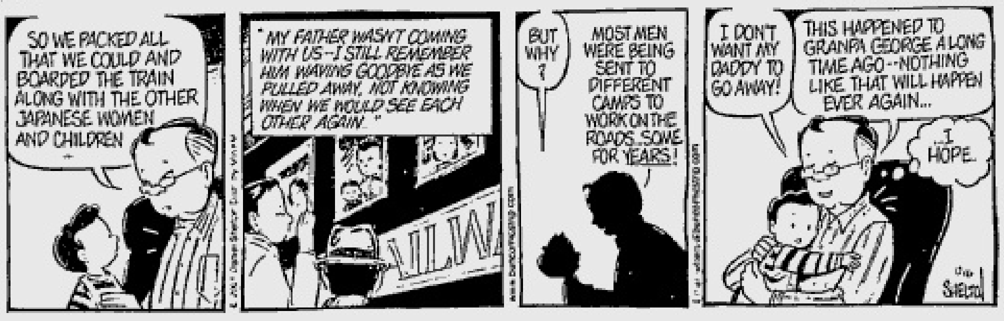
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


WHILE CHASING THE THREE LITTLE PIGS, THE BIG BAD WOLF SUDDENLY REALIZED HE'S ADVENTIST

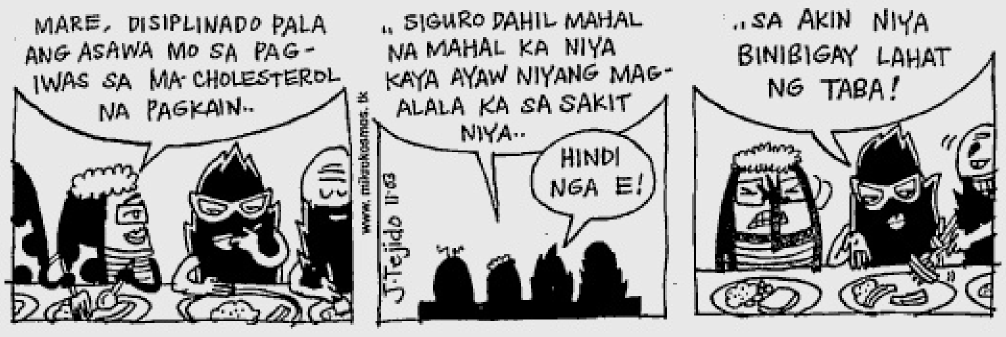
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SO WE PACKED ALL THAT WE COULD AND BOARDED THE TRAIN ALONG WITH THE OTHER JAPANESE WOMEN AND CHILDREN
"MY FATHER WASN'T COMING WITH US--I STILL REMEMBER HIM WAVING GOODBYE AS WE PULLED AWAY, NOT KNOWING WHEN WE WOULD SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN."
BUT WHY?
MOST MEN WERE BEING SENT TO DIFFERENT CAMPS TO WORK ON THE ROADS. SOME FOR YEARS!
I DON'T WANT MY DADDY TO GO AWAY!
THIS HAPPENED TO GRANPA GEORGE A LONG TIME AGO--NOTHING LIKE THAT WILL HAPPEN EVER AGAIN...
...I HOPE.
SHELTON

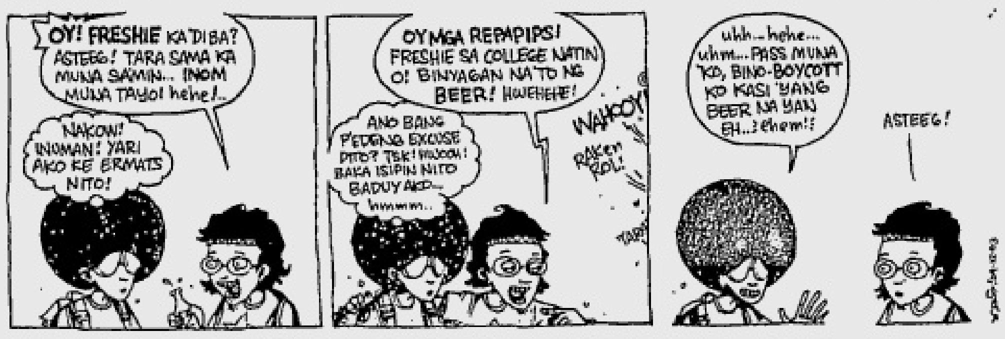
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MARE, DISIPLINADO PALA ANG ASAWA MO SA PAG-IWAS SA MA-CHOLESTEROL NA PAGKAIN..
www.mikrokosmos.tk
J.Tejido 11-03
.. SIGURO DAHIL MAHAL NA MAHAL KA NIYA KAYA AYAW NIYANG MAG-ALALA KA SA SAKIT NIYA..
HINDI NGA E!
..SA AKIN NIYA BINIBIGAY LAHAT NG TABA!

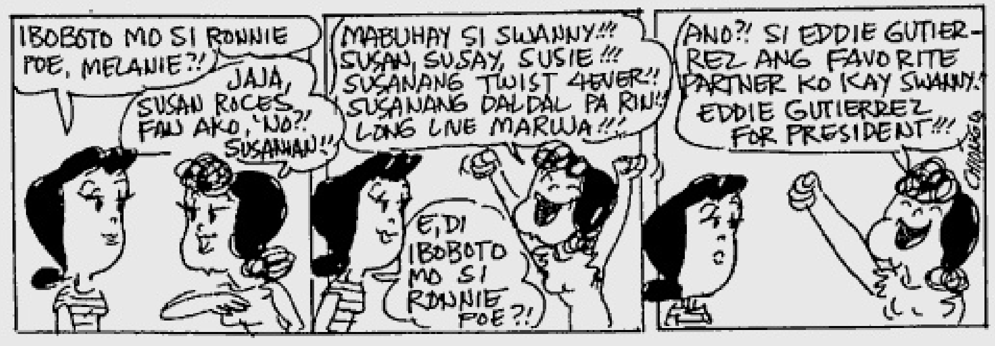
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


OY! FRESHIE KA DI BA? ASTEEG! TARA SAMA KA MUNA SAMIN.. INOM MUNA TAYO! hehe!..
NAKOW! INOMAN! YARI AKO KE ERMATS NITO!
OY MGA REPAPIPS! FRESHIE SA COLLEGE NATIN O! BINYAGAN NA'TO NG BEER! HWEHEHE!
ANO BANG PEDENG EXCUSE DITO? TSK! WOOH! BAKA ISIPIN NITO BADUY AKO... hmmm..
WAHOOY!
RAKEN ROL!
uhh.. hehe... uhm... PASS MUNA KO, BINO-BOYCOTT KO KASI 'YANG BEER NA YAN EH..!ehem!!
ASTEEG!

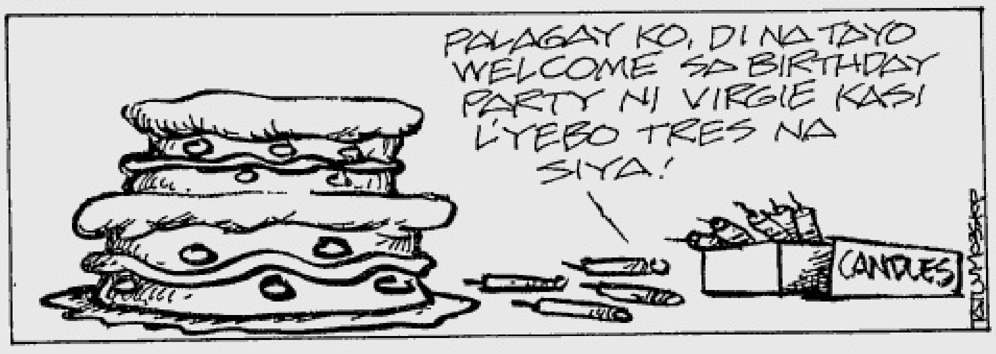
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


IBOBOTO MO SI RONNIE POE, MELANIE?!
JAJA, SUSAN ROCES FAN AKO, 'NO?! SUSANNAN!!
MABUHAY SI SWANNY!!! SUSAN, SUSAY, SUSIE!!! SUSANANG TWIST 4EVER!! SUSANANG DALDAL PA RIN!! LONG LIVE MARUJA!!!
E, DI IBOBOTO MO SI RONNIE POE?!
ANO?! SI EDDIE GUTIERREZ ANG FAVORITE PARTNER KO KAY SWANNY! EDDIE GUTIERREZ FOR PRESIDENT!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PALAGAY KO, DI NA TAYO WELCOME SA BIRTHDAY PARTY NI VIRGIE KASI L'YEBO TRES NA SIYA!
CANDLES

LISA Lorenzo-Uy's chewy Date Bars, the recipe for which she inherited from her mom who in turn inherited it from her mom

ANN Puno's specialty is Carrot Cake, but she encourages her friends to try out her unique and delicious Bailey's Choco Walnut, Pistachio and Kahlua Toffee cakes.

Who are the bakers in your neighborhood?

VILLAGE bakers become celebrities during the Christmas season for their mouthwatering specialties that people have come to love and crave.

In Ayala Alabang, Magallanes Village, BF Homes Parañaque and Mariposa Square in QC, mouthwatering cakes and to-die-for pastries made right in the kitchen of neighbors are given away as holiday gifts to other villagers.

Rosanna Angeles (tel. 4156880) in Mariposa Square makes luscious and tempting Mango Tartlets, with thin, crispy crusts and fresh mango toppings. She is also known for her tasty cheese rolls and éclairs, which she makes in small quantities that literally have her customers calling and begging for more.

Magallanes Village down south takes pride in two more bakers who have a "cult" following, especially during the Christmas season.

Joyce Aragon (8520841) specialty is super moist Rum Cake, which is also available in luscious chocolate version.

A few blocks away lives Lisa Lorenzo-Uy (8520841) whose family is known for making chewy Date Bars, the recipe for which she inherited from her mom who in turn inherited it from her mom. Through these years, the family's client base grew exponentially.

Another notable baker is Judith Hermoso (8056001) whose "Jammie's" *ensaymadas* have become bazaar favorites. Her light and fluffy mini *ensaymadas* come in regular cheese, delectable *ube* and rich *queso de bola* flavors. Judith also makes choco-licious crinkles and brownies.

The home of Ann Puno (807-2757) in Ayala Alabang is filled with many delectable pastries and cakes. Though her specialty is Carrot Cake, she encourages her friends to try out her unique and delicious Bailey's Choco Walnut, Pistachio and Kahlua Toffee cakes that she herself concocted.

All these bakers agree that quality ingredients produce quality food products. And the premium ingredient in all their goodies is Anchor butter.

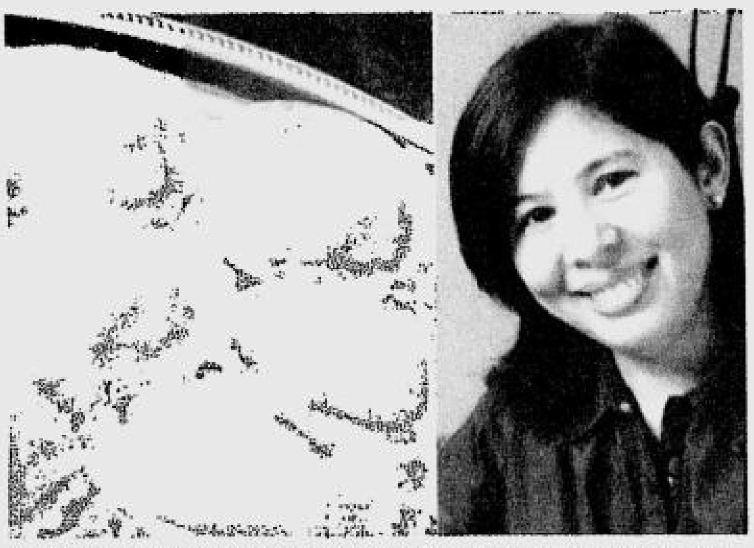
"The secret is in the ingredients," Puno revealed, which the other bakers likewise confirmed. "Quality ingredients produce quality food products."

"I love using salted Anchor Butter for baking," Hermoso shared. "It leaves a unique flavor in the taste buds and enhances the aroma of baked goodies."

"If I would ever need to substitute ingredients, it's the Anchor Butter that I would not take out," Angeles disclosed.

"As far back as when my grandmother was still handling the business, she was already using Anchor Butter," says Uy. " I have tried other brands in some of my cooking but I would always switch back to Anchor Butter."

For budding bakers who are interested in getting into the business of baking, there are lessons to learn from the experts. Do not substitute. Love what you are doing. Be quality conscious.



ROSANNA Angeles makes tempting Mango Tartlets, with thin, crispy crusts and fresh mango toppings.

JUDITH Hermoso bakes light and fluffy *ensaymadas* that come in regular cheese, *ube* and rich *queso de bola* flavors.

JOYCE Aragon's specialty is super moist Rum Cake, which is also available in luscious chocolate version.

One step to success

USING Pillsbury Cake Mixes as base, Joy San Gabriel whips up a variety of cakes and other baked goodies.

From page F4

Joy San Gabriel's Pillsbury Remarkable Revel Bars

200 g brown sugar
175 g butter
2 eggs
250 g Pillsbury Classic Hotcake Mix (one pouch inside a 500-g box)
300 g quick-cooking oats
200 g condensed milk
200 g dark chocolate
20 g butter

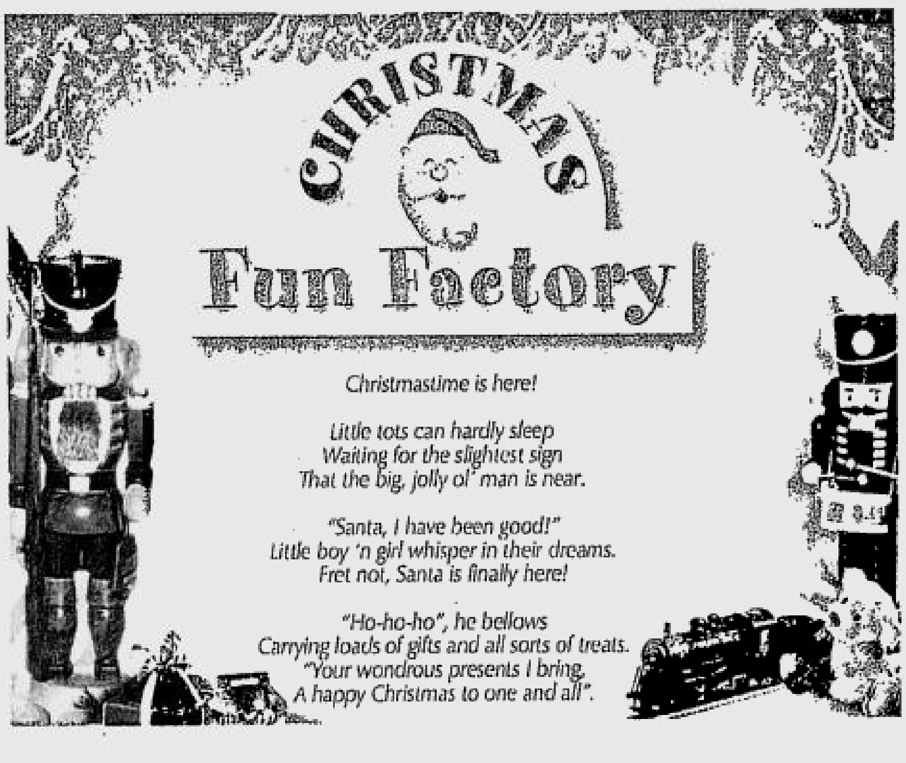
Combine condensed milk, dark chocolate and 20 grams butter. Melt over bain-marie or inside a double boiler. Set aside.

Pre-heat oven to 350 °F. Line a quarter sheet pan with greaseproof paper, cut rite, parchment paper or foil. Set aside.

In a bowl, combine brown sugar and butter. Mix together using a paddle attachment or a wooden spoon until combined. Add in eggs one at a time.

Fold in Pillsbury Classic Hotcake Mix. Fold in oats.

Divide the mixture into two. Using a rolling pin, evenly roll out half of the mixture on the prepared baking pan. Pour condensed milk/dark chocolate mixture. Drop the other half of the Pillsbury mixture in small lumps over the condensed milk-dark chocolate mixture. Bake for 25- 30 minutes.



CHRISTMAS
Fun Factory

Christmastime is here!

Little tots can hardly sleep
Waiting for the slightest sign
That the big, jolly ol' man is near.

"Santa, I have been good!"
Little boy 'n girl whisper in their dreams.
Fret not, Santa is finally here!

"Ho-ho-ho", he bellows
Carrying loads of gifts and all sorts of treats.
"Your wondrous presents I bring,
A happy Christmas to one and all".

Intimate Indulgence at the Rotisserie
Celebrate a luxurious Christmas Eve Dinner amidst the quiet and elegant confines of the Rotisserie. Classic set menus are offered with entertainment by a string quartet.
December 16 to 24, 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm

New Year's Eve Dinner Special is a toast to finer things in life...to the bounty on the table...succulent prime rib as main attraction!
December 31, 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm

Holiday Celebrations at the Court
Pavilion Court presents a sumptuous lunch and dinner set menus that feature a bit of everything for one well-rounded Yuletide meal.
December 16 to 25, lunch and dinner

Welcome New Year's Day the Pavilion Court way...indulge in a bounty of oriental favorites. We offer a rich spectacle of food – from beginning down to the last bite.
January 1, lunch and dinner

A Harmony of Flavors at Café Coquilla
Café Coquilla features a horde of splendid tastes on Christmas Eve. Gather around the warmth of family for a Noche Buena buffet that befits the holiday pleasure.
December 24, 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm

Christmas Fun Day Brunch is every child's holiday wish! Café Coquilla is transformed into Santa's magical village as funny clowns, lovable mascots and ol' Saint Nick welcome families. Face painting will keep kids entertained while enjoying a delightful buffet spread!
December 25, 10:30 am to 3:00 pm

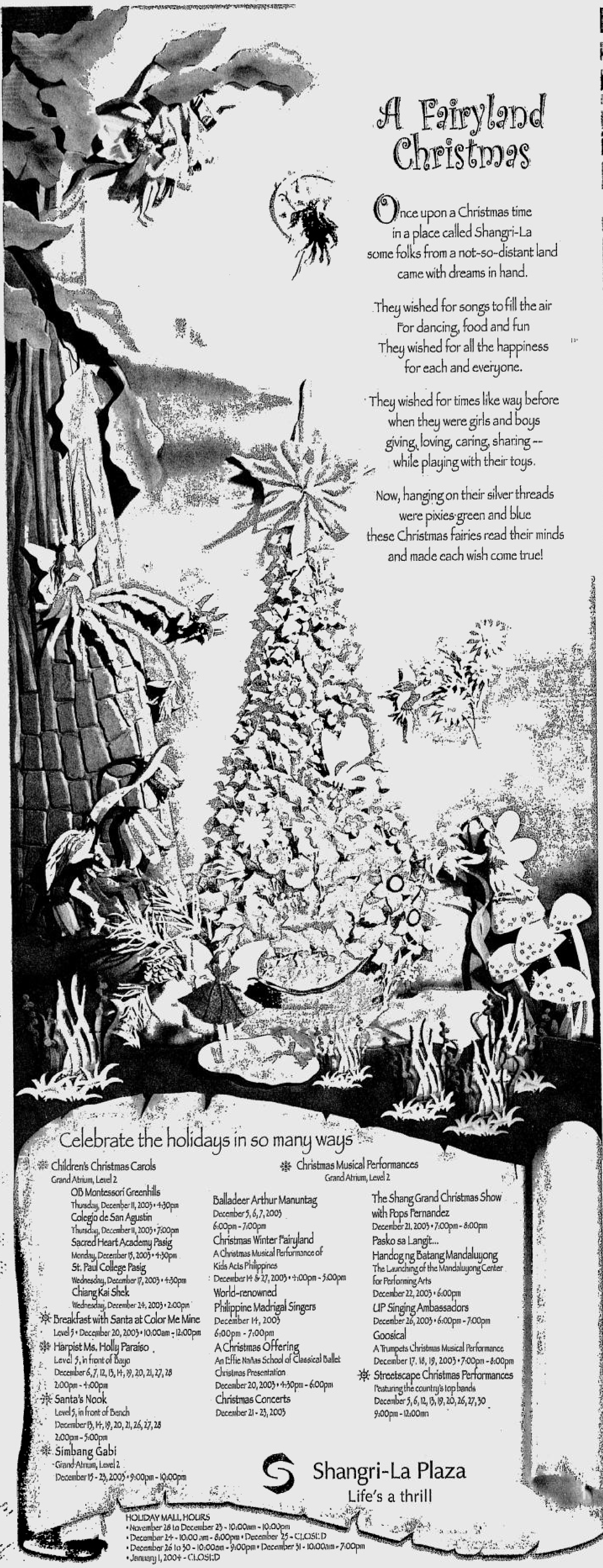
New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet will satisfy cravings from sweet to spicy and everything in between as this enormous buffet is unraveled.
December 31, 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm

New Year's Day Brunch with a punch. Merry-making is relentless as the abundance of food, wine and fun continues on New Year's Day.
January 1, 10:30 am to 3:00 pm

Countdown at the Music Room
Welcome the New Year with zest! Party all night with live band music, an array of hors d' oeuvres and feast full of roast specialties plus Champagne and sparkling wines.
December 31, 9:00 pm to 2:00 am

For inquiries and reservations, please call 526-1212 extension 2408.

MANILA PAVILION
United Nations Avenue, Ermita, Manila 1000, Philippines
Tel. (63-2) 526-1212 • Fax (63-2) 526-2552 • e-mail: info@manilapavilion.com.ph



A Fairyland Christmas

Once upon a Christmas time
in a place called Shangri-La
some folks from a not-so-distant land
came with dreams in hand.

They wished for songs to fill the air
For dancing, food and fun
They wished for all the happiness
for each and everyone.

They wished for times like way before
when they were girls and boys
giving, loving, caring, sharing --
while playing with their toys.

Now, hanging on their silver threads
were pixies green and blue
these Christmas fairies read their minds
and made each wish come true!

Celebrate the holidays in so many ways

❄ Children's Christmas Carols
Grand Atrium, Level 2
OB Montessori Greenhills
Thursday, December 11, 2003 • 4:30pm
Colegio de San Agustin
Thursday, December 11, 2003 • 7:00pm
Sacred Heart Academy Pasig
Monday, December 15, 2003 • 4:30pm
St. Paul College Pasig
Wednesday, December 17, 2003 • 4:30pm
Chiang Kai Shek
Wednesday, December 24, 2003 • 2:00pm

❄ Breakfast with Santa at Color Me Mine
Level 5 • December 20, 2003 • 10:00am - 12:00pm

❄ Harpist Ms. Holly Paraiso
Level 5, in front of Bayo
December 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28
2:00pm - 4:00pm

❄ Santa's Nook
Level 5, in front of Bench
December 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28
2:00pm - 5:00pm

❄ Simbang Gabi
Grand Atrium, Level 2
December 15 - 23, 2003 • 9:00pm - 10:00pm

❄ Christmas Musical Performances
Grand Atrium, Level 2

Balladeer Arthur Manuntag
December 5, 6, 7, 2003
6:00pm - 7:00pm
Christmas Winter Fairyland
A Christmas Musical Performance of
Kids Acts Philippines
December 14 & 27, 2003 • 4:00pm - 5:00pm
World-renowned
Philippine Madrigal Singers
December 14, 2003
6:00pm - 7:00pm
A Christmas Offering
An Effie Nañas School of Classical Ballet
Christmas Presentation
December 20, 2003 • 4:30pm - 6:00pm
Christmas Concerts
December 21 - 23, 2003

The Shang Grand Christmas Show
with Pops Fernandez
December 21, 2003 • 7:00pm - 8:00pm
Pasko sa Langit...
Handog ng Batang Mandaluyong
The Launching of the Mandaluyong Center
for Performing Arts
December 22, 2003 • 6:00pm
UP Singing Ambassadors
December 26, 2003 • 6:00pm - 7:00pm
Goosical
A Trumpets Christmas Musical Performance
December 17, 18, 19, 2003 • 7:00pm - 8:00pm

❄ Streetscape Christmas Performances
Featuring the country's top bands
December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, 30
9:00pm - 12:00mn

Shangri-La Plaza
Life's a thrill

HOLIDAY MALL HOURS
• November 28 to December 23 - 10:00am - 10:00pm
• December 24 - 10:00 am - 8:00pm • December 25 - CLOSED
• December 26 to 30 - 10:00am - 9:00pm • December 31 - 10:00am - 7:00pm
• January 1, 2004 - CLOSED

PILLSBURY Yummy Pecan Rolls

One step to success

IT has been said that women make excellent cooks, especially bakers, because women are more meticulous, more industrious, more into details than men.

From toothpaste to cake mixes

Beth Bañez, who has graced several TV commercials and print ads for famous brands, started baking at a young age.

From simple cookies and brownies, she eventually expanded to cakes and other rich and sumptuous desserts. She also did wedding cakes, but she stopped because of the occupational hazard of baking fondant cakes. Due to constant pressing and squeezing at the wrist, her median nerves compressed which brought about carpal tunnel syndrome. She experienced frequent burning, tingling or itching numbness in the palm of the hand and the fingers. This prompted her to undergo surgery to treat her hands.

Now, thanks to Pillsbury, Beth bakes with less effort and pressure. "With Pillsbury, there are only one to three simple steps and you can whip up fabulous desserts. Just pre-heat the oven, mix and bake."

She swears by Pillsbury Hotcake and Baking Mixes which make baking easier and convenient. In fact, Beth has developed a most delectable recipe using Pillsbury hotcake mix for her yummy pecan rolls. "It's something my family enjoys since most of them have a sweet tooth."

Whereas before, she had to start at nighttime to do her rolls just for the dough to rise, her rolls are now ready in just an hour with Pillsbury Cake Mix.

This Christmas, Beth will prepare her best-selling apple pie made from Pillsbury flour and cornstarch. Beth does all her baking at home so she does not have to be away from the kids. She is well-known for her chocolate decadent cake made from Pillsbury Devil's Food Cake Mix and mouthwatering cheesecakes —from the simple and plain New York cheesecake to the strawberry, blueberry and toppings of all sorts.

Joy of teaching

Armed with skill, an entrepreneurial spirit and a supportive husband, Joy San Gabriel Young today is into a business she knows and loves to do. Early on, she knew that baking was her forte.

Joy does not only offer cooking classes at Culinary Arts Studio in QC, she also supplies cakes and pastries to leading bars, restaurants and coffee shops in Metro Manila.

Joy is known for her best-seller, the Amaretto flourless cake. It is a no-flour Belgian chocolate cake covered with whipped cream, icing and served with caramel sauce.

She has also concocted special recipes using the one-step Pillsbury hotcake mix. "You should sample my butterscotch fudge and revel bars using the Pillsbury hotcake mix. Pillsbury products can be used for a 101 different recipes. You are only limited by your own creativity and imagination."

BETH Bañez uses Pillsbury Hotcake Mix for her moist, delectable pecan rolls.

Beth Bañez's Pillsbury Yummy Pecan Rolls

Dry mixture:
2¼ c Pillsbury Classic Hotcake Mix
¼ c vegetable shortening
Milk mixture:
1 egg
1/3 c evaporated milk
Flavoring:
2 tbsp softened butter
¼ c brown sugar
1 tbsp ground cinnamon
Nuts mixture:
¼ c softened butter
¼ c brown sugar
1 c chopped pecan

Mix the dry mixture by hand, using a wooden spoon until you get pea-size pieces. For the milk mixture, beat eggs and add milk. In a bowl, make a well out of the dry mixture. Pour in the milk mixture.

Put the mixture on top of a floured table and knead 20 times. Roll it using a rolling pin.

Spread two tablespoons butter. Sprinkle cinnamon and sugar on top. Add half of the pecan nuts on top of the flattened dough.

Roll it, making one long bread. Slice into 12 equal parts (1 ½ inch apart).

On a prepared 8 x 8 pan, combine ¼ c butter, ¼ c sugar and remaining nuts.

Spread dough on top of the nuts mixture. Bake at 350 °F for 35 minutes.

ONE STEP/ F3

PILLSBURY Remarkable Revel Bars